

THE
HISTORY
OF
Prime Ministers and Favourites,
IN ENGLAND;
FROM THE
CONQUEST down to the PRESENT TIME:

WITH
REFLECTIONS on the fatal Consequences
of their MISCONDUCT;
AND
POLITICAL DEDUCTIONS on the
Perpetuity of FREEDOM in the ENGLISH
Constitution:

Ascertained and Vindicated
From the DESPOTISM affected by any of our
SOVEREIGNS.

Quale sit futurum novi Principis ingenium & regimen, apparet
ex iis, quos primos publicis muneribus præficit. Si enim
bonos & egregios viros eligit amicos & magistratus, bonum &
felix regimen futurum est. Sin malos, & gratia, pecunia,
vel ambitu potius quam virtute subnixos admovet, infelix
futurum est.
TAC. Lib. XIII. Annal.

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THE
HISTORY
OF
PRIME MINISTERS, &c.

ALL nations, whatever their form of government may be, seem to agree in this notion, that it is better to have a good than a happy prince: whence, upon more mature consideration, we may call it not merely a notion, but an instinct or law of nature, whereby mankind are actuated to wish ardently, that those whom it hath pleased Providence to set over them as rulers, may, upon all occasions, study and consult their real interest and welfare. And, indeed, princes themselves, if they would but sometimes bend their thoughts to serious reflections, cannot help feeling the emotions of interior conviction, that it is more glorious to live in the memory of posterity, as good than happy; the first being the genuine

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nuine result of pure virtue; the second, the delusive sport of capricious fortune. What is extent of territory to a nation that finds in itself the sources of felicity without it? Insolent ambition is always odious, and commonly meets with condign punishment. What is vain pomp, what are the empty shadows of magnificence, what is life sunk in luxurious ease, what are rational faculties debased and emasculated by frivolous selfish concerns? They are of no account in the estimation of the wise, they have a manifest tendency to make others miserable, and the prince that strives to raise a superstructure of happiness upon them, must surely be conscious to himself of the obloquy both of cotemporaries and posterity.

A good prince will not build his fame upon so unstable a foundation. His extensive spirit of beneficence will prompt him to take the lead by virtuous example; for as Pliny justly observes in his panegyric, the life of the prince is a perpetual pattern, the people direct their curious views upon it, and stand in need not so much of command as instruction. And Paterculus says †, a prince who does that which is right, will teach his subjects to behave in the same manner: he is

† Lib. II.

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the first and greatest in command, so also he should be the first and greatest in example. The celestial bodies cannot rest nor stand still, but receive their respective forces from perpetual motion ; so a prince should never droop into indolence ; delicacy and softness suit but very indifferently the active powers of administering justice, of providing for the safety and advantages of his subjects, and of so ordering the commonwealth committed to his care, that he may seem to have constantly in view the memorable † saying of Adrian the Roman emperor, advising ‘ the exercise of princely power as the concern of the people, and not as a private concern.’ One must be surprized, were there not frequent examples of it in history, that any prince could separate his interests from those of his people, or presume that they were incompatible. But such sinister views have no ascendant over the good prince’s mind ; he sees their incongruity for being productive of the prosperity of the state he governs, and therefore it is his choice to love the commonwealth as his father’s house, and his subjects as his children.

Whoever weighs well the motto prefixed to this tract will find it verified in all times

† Principatum exercendum esse tanquam rem populi, non vero ut privatam.

and countries. It imports, ‘ that the future genius and government of a new prince, will appear from those whom he has appointed as chief over the public offices of the state. If he chuses good men and of consummate abilities for friends and magistrates, his government will be good and happy : but if he promotes bad, or those that are rather supported by favour, money, or bribery, than by virtue, it will be unhappy.’ Here then is a prognostic, a prophetic maxim never yet found to have been proved false ! And as it is such, every prince that pays any regard to his own honour and the well-being of his people, must consider it in the light of a salutary caution for prudently judging of, and examining into, the merits of those he is about to prefer to posts of importance. It will be soon known whether the party, is deserving when once in possession ; for the magistracy shews the man.

A prince of capacity fills all posts in his state with men of eminent abilities, and his choice must be good, because he can only prefer persons of a similar genius to his own. On the contrary, a weak prince entertains such as resemble him, and thus generally makes a bad choice. The people, who cannot personally know their master, judge of him

him from the talents of those he employs. Queen Christina of Sweden used to say, that under a stupid monarch, the whole court is, or will become such. However, let the capacity of a prince be what it will, if he can but prevail upon himself to set aside his self-love, and can also preclude all motives of favour, he may listen to the counsels of a few of approved wisdom and integrity, men practised in the knowledge of men, who can lay before him a just estimate of persons and characters. Then he cannot fail in a proper choice of men and measures. If the best and wisest princes acted in this manner, diffident of themselves, by how much the more should others be circumspect in their choice of counsellors, especially when conscious to themselves of insufficiency for forming adequate judgments, and discharging acts of government, which are to carry with them weight and dignity. The great emperor and philosopher Marcus Antoninus being once spoke to by a flatterer for paying too great a deference to the advice of friends; ‘ It is by far more just, answered the emperor, that I should be directed by the counsels of such great friends, persons of unquestionable merit, than I should oblige them to be controlled by the dictates of my will.’ The answer was

worthy of the emperor's noble candour, and a severe reprimand to the insinuating courtier.

In another point of view, it may be a good lesson to princes not to hearken to the voice of a factious cabal, or unwillingly to suffer themselves to be caught in the snare of the artifice of others, who, aspiring to the guidance of the state-helm, plead the necessity of relaxation from the anxieties and fatigues of government, and so insensibly immerse them in pleasures, that at last they become regardless of what is transacted under the sanction of their abused authority. Thus it was that Sejanus withdrew Tiberius from informing himself of the true state of the affairs of the public.

But to bring nearer home the matter from those general ideas which may have their use in political discussions, it may be observed with good reason, that no one man is more to be distinguished from another by his features, than one nation is from another by its peculiar turn of genius in respect to government. The manners of every country are so adapted to their favourite form of government, that it is scarce possible to alter the one, without first debauching the other. All the revolutions that have happened in the several states of Europe, are so many plain de-

monstrations of this truth ; and so evident a test seems indeed to have been established by the wisdom of Providence, that every nation, by perceiving the steps that naturally lead to their destruction, may guard against the danger. No nation therefore can be brought to ruin and desolation but by its own remissness or consent.

Now, if at any time a free people, by nature hardy, by custom frugal and industrious, and by their situation incapable of subsisting but by their own labour, manufactures, and trade, should behold luxury, avarice, sloth, corruption and treachery, breaking in upon them like a torrent ; and should discover a man in high station to be the promoter of this destructive change of manners ; they can no longer doubt of his being engaged in a design to enslave them. And if such a nation should tamely suffer their corruptor with the agents of his iniquity to continue in the exercise of power, they may justly be accused of consenting to their own ruin : for statesmen are not easily frightened from their purpose, much less are they subject to repentance for their crimes. Pretended exigencies of the state, with an hardened obstinacy to break and crush refractory minds, drive them on ; so that he who has once made an open attack upon the

constitution of his country, will never think himself safe from public justice, but by its total subversion, which therefore he must accomplish at the peril of his life.

There is no singularity in the genius of the British nation, which has been more remarked by foreigners, nor more censured by those polite writers who were born under absolute governments, than our strong inclination to a change of ministers. But had these gentlemen been better acquainted with us, they would have found that this love of change never grew to any height till the power, which it is the intention of our constitution to distribute amongst several ministers, is all centered in one man. And to our honour be it said, there is nothing so peculiarly characteristic of a Briton, nothing that has more frequently preserved our liberties, than that insuperable hatred to an over-grown monster of power, a PRIME MINISTER, which has always prevailed in this kingdom. It may well be called our Palladium, or the eternal basis on which we may rest in security : for, whilst we cherish and retain it, our constitution must be out of danger ; but when once we submit to the supineness of disregarding it, like the rest of our neighbours, we must sink into slavery. It then seems next to an

impossibility, that Great Britain should be ripened for chains, but by such a creature of power ; and hence, indeed, proportioned to the hazard our constitution is exposed to from a Prime Minister, has been the national antipathy in all ages to this second-rate tyrant.

Whilst power is impartially lodged in many hands, we both obey and are fond of it. Here there is nothing to alarm us. Several great and able men, jointly engaged in one administration, but acting uninfluenced and independent of one another in their respective departments, is the only model of government suited to the legislature, suited to the very genius of the British nation. Ministers, on such a footing, are checks upon one another ; each of them may have his distinct set of adherents, some of whom alliance, friendship, esteem, and perhaps expectations, unite in his particular interest ; but the main support must be the character he bears in his country. When a number of such great men thus conspire friendly together to produce the salutary ends of good government, they draw after them a large body of the nation, and cannot therefore act but upon principles, that may preserve to them their popularity amongst their fellow-subjects. Such a ministry is built upon the strong foundation of the people's

people's confidence and affection. These are the motives that give them strength to execute their master's business, and their master can offer such men no degrees of power or wealth, that would be an equivalent, even in point of interest, to the loss of their character.

Reverse this noble prospect, and behold the power of many ministers shrunk up in the grasp of one ambitious man ! Can such a one subsist by any arts, but those of corruption, or keeping his prince in ignorance of the true state of affairs ? As an enemy to his country, he can have no personal interest, no excelling qualities, no extraordinary accomplishments, to attract persons of integrity into his combination. Men of real worth and influence in their country are too much his equals, perhaps superiors, not to scorn to act under him. Men of great abilities will scarce submit to be reputed the mean tools of another's power. What the Prime Minister wants therefore in weight, he makes strenuous endeavours to supply in numbers ; and, as he cannot gain these by his natural strength, he must introduce all the base stratagems of corruption, by a lavish expending of the public treasure, together with a multiplicity of places, pensions, reversions, jobs, and contracts.

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It is a truth, too much to be lamented by all well-wishers to their country, that too many of our nobility and gentry, by their luxuriant and extravagant manner of living, pave the way for their coming into a necessitous dependance. These are the very persons the Prime Minister hunts after. He allures them, sometimes by feigned pity, sometimes by applauding and indulging them in their follies. As their morals are already corrupt, it is exceeding easy for him to corrupt their votes. Now his sway becomes more and more extensive, and he may for some time maintain his power against the bent of a whole people. But even this device must at last fail him ; for as corruption is the Prime Minister's sole instrument of state, and the Ar-canum of his empire, it cannot be expected that when all ways and means are irretrievably exhausted, the continually craving appetite can be satiated. Then it is that he becomes desperate in his projects ; his creatures are no longer true to him than whilst they are feeding ; and his other fellow subjects, oppressed and plundered to gorge these, are all unanimous for decreeing his overthrow. Thus circumvented, what must be his resources ? He has no other method left to skreen himself from just resentment, than by throwing into his master's

master's hand such an absolute power, as may be sufficient to protect him against the whole kingdom, if his master is weak enough to stand upon the narrow bottom of his minister.

This has been, and this must be, the desperate game of every Prime Minister in this country. Justly therefore is such a one the object of the people's hatred. Should we carefully pass in review the different periods of the British History, we shall find our wisest monarchs had no such minister ; and of those princes who had, we learn that some were betrayed by their Minion, as soon as he saw the sovereign power was too weak to protect him ; others, we read, lost both their crown and life by too obstinate an adherence to a hated Favourite ; and some, though very few, saved themselves, by honourably giving up a wicked minister to the justice of an injured nation. To set these interesting particulars in a clear light, it will not be amiss to take a cursory view of all the reigns from the Conquest down to the present time, and to throw together some deductions on the incidents as they occur.

William the First, surnamed the Conqueror, began his reign in 1066. Being by nature formed to keep, as well as to gain a crown, he never would trust his power into one hand.

When therefore the most potent of his ministers, Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, had, by his rapacious management of the public money, amassed a mighty treasure, and was forming a scheme to establish himself independent of his master, the wise king took him from amidst a confluence of nobles and gentry, who attended on him, and at once disappointed all his ambitious views, by a strict imprisonment, and he was afterwards obliged to abjure the realm.

We have here first in this minister an example of the two favourite vices of ministers, avarice and ambition. They may in a great measure be called the rocks they usually split upon. Perhaps they are not always united in the same person, but we certainly find that one or the other is always the moving principle of their conduct. There is no passion which so often misses its aim, or on which the present has so much influence to the prejudice of the future, as avarice ; and it may be remarked, that it reigns most in those ministers who have but few good qualities to recommend them ; or if they have any good qualities, it generally gets the better of them, till at last we see an unnatural gradation of mistrust, unsociableness, peevishness, severity, and cruelty. A minister of state should be

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disinterested, if for no other reason than that private interest in statesmen is always prejudicial to the public. In like manner, we are induced to condemn the ambition of ministers, as a monstrous excrescence of the mind, which makes superfluity, honours, riches, distinction and power, mere necessaries of life. But as in the main ambition is the vigour and activity of the soul, in whatever department a minister acts, he should think it a duty incumbent on him, as the servant of the prince his master, and of the public, to seek no other end than their tranquillity and greatness. Glory is the only thing he is allowed to repute his own ; but how can he hope even for this, if his attempts at independency discredit his master's reputation ? That minister only can be of a true generous spirit, who requires no other reward of his actions, but the honour and satisfaction of having done them. A certain splendor arises from virtue that makes him respectable to all ; and it is herein he places true glory, which, as Tully says, consists in these particulars, that the people love us, and that being affected with a certain admiration towards us, they may think we deserve honour.

A truly great man is not contented with the submission only of those under him, but rather covets

covets to be loved than feared. The reverse is the character historians give us of William I. and therefore not intitled to stand in the list of good and unexceptionable princes. 'Tis true, he used the English with some humanity at his accession ; but finding them disgusted at his rewarding his Norman followers with English estates, and besides engaged in some plots to dethrone him in favour of Edgar Atheling, the rightful heir to the crown, he treated them barbarously, cutting off the hands and feet of many thousands, and destroying all the North of England with fire and sword. Before he died there was scarce an English gentleman possessed of an estate in his own right.

William II. who succeeded him in 1087, is represented as a prince of a fierce and avaricious temper. He was wholly under the influence of Ranulph, bishop of Durham, who, by new methods of squeezing and oppressing the people, so fed his master's insatiable thirst after money, as to become the principal director of his counsels. His mal-administration disposed the subjects to revolt. One conspiracy broke out in the year 1095 ; and another more formidable was ripe for execution, when the king's death prevented it. He was killed in the New Forest by his bow-bearer,

bearer, Sir Walter Tyrrel, a Norman knight; whether by mischance or design is not agreed; but this prince might have enjoyed an absolute government of all his subjects, had he sought it by endearing acts; but contending to establish it by force, he made both himself and his people miserable.

Henry I. succeeded in 1100. He is justly reckoned amongst the best and wisest of our princes, and had no Prime Minister. He sought out the most able men in his kingdom for the offices of state, preferring such only as were acceptable to the people. In all other respects he took the best courses to please and gratify his subjects; by seeing himself that no corruption or oppression should burden the country; by making frequent progresses to observe how his realm was ordered in every part of it; by being affable and easy of access, so that all might enjoy his company; and by being hospitable, so that all might partake of his good cheer. Nothing so much endeared him to the nation, as committing to a close and loathsome prison Ranulph of Durham, the Prime Minister and oppressor of the former reign; and, when afterwards one of his own ministry, Robert Earl of Malling, had by his conduct incurred the people's hatred, he first disgraced and then stript him of his

vast

vast estate. Both life and fortune seem to have been in the power of the crown from the time of the conquest, 'till this prince's reign ; but like a true father of his country, he consented to restore the laws of Edward the Confessor, whereby his barons were entitled to hold their estates on the same advantageous terms the Saxons, their predecessors, had enjoyed them. This revival of the Saxon laws, and reducing the principal of them into writing, was the foundation of that statute, which afterwards obtained the name of MAGNA CHARTA.

If we consider attentively the character of this king, we shall find that he fulfilled in the actions of his life all the requisites of a patriot prince. He treated his subjects with an extreme tenderness, persuaded, that to intimidate them with fear, after the example of his father and brother, was only to make himself master of the body, whereas love would make him reign over the heart. Princes that govern with rigour, cannot say to themselves that they live in security. Those that give fear, must be afraid themselves in their turn, not being able to rid themselves of the apprehension of the revolt of people who obey them only by constraint : whence, if violent things are not durable, an empire having no

other foundation but violence, cannot long subsist. Yet, though our Henry was sensible that mildness was preferable to rigour, and that a state is more solidly built upon love than fear, there were notwithstanding occasions when he found it expedient to make his clemency yield to severity, and to set aside for a moment the quality of father, to exercise that of judge. The zeal of justice animated his heart, yet so as to be always an innocent affection, curbing vice and rewarding virtue. No king is worthy of a sceptre that is not like him, good and just.

Stephen, earl of Boloign, son of Adela the Conqueror's fourth daughter, stept into the throne in 1135, while the empress Maud, Henry the First's daughter, was absent in France. He was elected to the crown upon this consideration; that by preferring one, whose title was weak, the nation might be better secured in their ancient liberties, than they could be under one, that came to the throne by lineal descent. Accordingly, the fealty sworn to him was upon condition that he observed the tenour of a charter, wherein the rights and liberties of the subject were declared. But his Prime Minister, Alberic de Ver having led him into arbitrary measures, the nation revolted from him to the empress Maud,

Maud, who was the rightful heir of the crown by descent. She too had a Prime Minister, the bishop of Winchester, who, tho' brother to Stephen, had set the crown on her head ; but in whom she reposed too great a confidence. For this ambitious statesman, perceiving the Londoners averse from Maud, and that the whole nation began to dislike her, consulted his own interest by a private treaty with her competitor, and having obtained his own terms, obliged his royal mistress to quit the kingdom, and retire to her own dominions beyond sea. However, it was stipulated that Henry, the son of the empress Maud, by Jeffery Plantagenet, earl of Anjou, should succeed him ; and the next year king Stephen dying, Henry II. in 1154, ascended the throne without opposition.

This Henry II. in all his reign had but one Prime Minister, to whom all the troubles, or the seeds at least of all the troubles of his life were owing. This was the famous Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, who was for some years the sole manager of all affairs of state, and was entrusted with the care of the education of the king's eldest son. But this wicked minister was no sooner raised to an independent state, than he entered into an open opposition to his master ; distressed

him in all his counsels ; and concerted such measures with the young prince, who had been under his tuition, as produced an open rupture between the father and the son. He insisted with the clergy on being exempted from the jurisdiction of the temporal courts in criminal cases, and at length became so exceeding insolent, that the king let fall some expressions, as if he wanted to get rid of him ; whereupon four of the king's knights hastened to Canterbury, and killed the archbishop as he assisted at the afternoon service before the altar. The queen, and the king's sons, soon after raised a rebellion against him, on account of his familiarity with fair Rosamond ; and his sons being joined by the king of France, defeated their father, which broke the king's heart. Many indeed have imputed all the disasters of this unhappy reign, to the judgments of heaven upon the king, for having sinned against the laws of nature and of conscience in the beginning of his reign, by an open violation and disobedience of his father's will. This king resumed the grants of the crown-lands which king Stephen had made, and confirmed the great charter granted by his grandfather Henry.

Richard I. the eldest surviving son of Henry II. succeeded him in 1189. As he spent the greatest

greatest part of his time beyond sea, so he unhappily vested his whole power in the narrow hands of one Prime Minister, the bishop of Ely, who soon exerted his authority independant of his master: for he not only imprisoned and oppressed the king's best subjects, but even turned out his personal favourites. He excluded the nobility and those ministers whom the king had joined in commission with him, from any share of government, and acted in so arbitrary and insolent a manner, as rendered him odious to the whole kingdom. The nation, no longer able to bear with his oppression, invited from beyond sea earl John, who had thereby an opportunity of assuming the government, whilst his unhappy brother the king, being taken prisoner by the emperor, in his return from the Holy Land, had well nigh lost his life and kingdom, by thus imprudently putting the reins of government into the hands of one ill-chosen minister, who could not hold them. The nation paid an immense sum for this king's ransom; but he did not long survive it, being mortally wounded before the castle of Chalons in France.

King John, his brother, and youngest son of Henry II. succeeded him in 1199. He was a poor weak prince, suffering himself to

be governed by the man, who had the best address to flatter him, and most of all by such, who offered him new methods of raising money on the people. By this secret Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury, became the sole director of his councils, which he conducted in so arbitrary a manner, as to raise a civil war, in the very beginning of which, this pecuniary projector died. His successor in favour and power was John Gray, a Norfolk man, who for his private interest, engaged his master, first in idle contests abroad with the pope and the king of France; and then persuaded him to mean submissions to those very enemies he had raised against him. This disgusted all the subjects at home; for the nation could not bear that strangers should offer indignities to the king and kingdom, with impunity. The Norfolk man, being thus become the object of the people's hatred, next procured for his master a considerable body of foreign troops, which he kept in pay, in order to conquer his own subjects; and this bad step drew on an invasion; so that our wretched country was wasted by two contending armies, 'till the unhappy monarch himself, being in the end deserted on all sides, was poisoned at Swineshead-abby, and died unpitied, as he had lived unbeloved.

Henry

Henry III. eldest son of king John, succeeded him in 1216. Unable to learn wisdom from his father's misconduct and misfortunes, he was all his life a wretched prey to favourites. Hugh, or Hubert de Burgh was the first, and a most insolent one. He forced the people to pay as he pleased, and not according to their abilities. His ill conduct bred an insurrection against the king, who at length forsook him ; being convinced of this minister's folly, in expending the treasure of the nation in fruitless and shameful expeditions ; and of his fraud, in applying no small share of it to his own private use. He was both disgraced and imprisoned for his mal-administration : but the poor monarch was no sooner delivered from this destructive engrosser of power, than he fell into the hands of another ; Peter, bishop of Winchester. This minister and his creatures so harrassed the kingdom with taxes, that the king was forced to summon a parliament, in order to prevent a civil war. But the barons sent the king word they would not come to parliament, 'till he had removed the bishop of Winchester from his court ; which if he refused to do, they would expel him and his evil counsellor the realm, and chuse a new king. This unhappy reign was afterwards one continued

scene of oppressi. and civil war, occasioned by the wicked ministers, who successively engrossed the sovereign's ear, and made him quarrel with his worthiest subjects, till at last a Prime Minister, Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, whom he had raised from nothing, employed all the power his master had weakly put into his hands, in opposition to him. He first raised an army, and then attacked the king at Lewis, where he defeated and took him prisoner, and kept him under close confinement for near two years, himself all the while governing the nation in his name ; till the brave prince Edward slew this traitorous Prime Minister at Evesham, and thereby set both the king and kingdom at liberty. This king resumed the crown lands, and cancelled the Great Charter.

Edward I. who in 1272, succeeded his father Henry III. may well be ranked amongst the greatest princes, that ever reigned in this or any other country. Copying after Henry I. a model which he endeavoured to exceed, he never bestowed his confidence on one man only, but sought after the ablest of his nobles for public posts, in which he gave to each an equal share of power. He severely punished every one in employment, who was found guilty of oppression or injustice ; and no less than

than thirteen of his judges were at one time condemned by him for extortion, and fined 100,000 marks, which was then as much as 800,000 would be at this time. Three knights were chosen in every county to determine what infractions were made in the great charter, and to this wise prince we owe the best laws in being to this day, for securing the liberties and properties of the subject ; for he consulted in all things his people's interest, and their inclination rather than his own. And, in nothing was his sagacity more remarkable, than in foretelling the unhappy fate of his only surviving son.

Edward II. who began his reign in 1307. Never prince came to the crown with greater love and more general applause of all his subjects than he did. This was chiefly on account of his father, of whose virtues, by his first shew of popularity, it was expected he would be equally the inheriter. And indeed, the love of his subjects might have been secured to him by a little wise management ; but when it appeared that he hated all his father's real friends, and that he violated his father's last will, by recalling Gaveston from banishment ; the aversion to him grew as universal as the applause had been. His Prime Minister Gaveston became so odious to the nation,

nation, that the nobles rose in arms against him, and having seized, they executed him without a trial. This minion was no sooner destroyed, than two others rose in his stead ; the Spencers, father and son. These men so vexed the people with their arbitrary impositions, that it drew on a war between the king and the barons, who compelled him to banish the Spencers ; but he soon recalling them, the queen, and Mortimer her gallant, passed over into France, taking prince Edward with them, the king's eldest son. They afterwards invaded the kingdom, the Spencers were put to death as traitors, and the poor monarch himself lost his crown and life soon after.

Here it will not be improper to observe, in regard to Favouritism, that there are few Favourites who know how to order their actions, and to maintain themselves in the moderation that is necessary for preserving the good graces both of their master and the public. One must be born with a very eminent genius, to be capable of digesting an extraordinary favour, and it is certain, that as the excess of aliments suppresses the action of the stomach, and suffocates natural heat, in like manner an excess of favour robs most men of their judgment, and infatuates them to the degree of

of making them lose the use of prudence. It is therefore few or none of them have been found to enjoy the gifts of fortune till they had made a peaceful exit from off the stage of life : on the contrary, the far greater part have been seen in all times, after being led by fortune in triumph to the highest pinnacle of grandeur, to have precipitated themselves into the deepest abyss of misery, or to have struck against the favour itself they possessed, as if it had been converted into a rock for their destruction. He that is wiser, will consider that a middling favour, a favour that does not flash into noise and surprise, carries more security with it than the greatest. He will rest contented with what his master with the voice of the people, is pleased to confer upon him ; so that if fortune shews some earnestness in raising him, his prudence will teach him how inconstant her favours are, and that nothing is more capable of making them permanent than using them with moderation ; more especially he should be extremely careful of never abusing the confidence reposed in him, by usurping too great an authority, or aiming at independance. But in whatever shape this topic may be considered, it is very certain that the title of Favourite has been always odious in England : not that it is pretended

tended to exclude majesty from the pleasing fancy of a bosom friend ; but it will be always more prudent for blunting the stings of envy, and making void the suspicion of ill counsels, that a king should never affect having a Favourite, nor a Favourite affect being favoured by a king.

Edward III. in his minority was under the usurped tutelage of the queen his mother. During her weak administration, which began in 1327, Mortimer was sole minister. His base murder of the deposed king, his scandalous treaty with the Scots, his rapacious sale of public offices, and his open robbery of the nation's treasure, had so dishonoured and incensed the whole kingdom, that whilst he was wholly taken up with inventing new methods for aggrandizing himself and all his kindred, the nobles conspired to seize upon his person ; which being done in the queen's apartment, the king being present at detecting him there, they forced the queen to call a parliament ; in which she herself was divested of all her ill-conducted authority, and her minion Mortimer was hanged and drawn at Tyburn. During the rest of this long and glorious reign, there was no Prime Minister, but many of those statesmen, whom the king employed, were at different times called by
him

him to a strict account for base practices, in raising oppressive taxes, and for corrupt dealing in the treasury. The chancellor, treasurer, chief-justice, and five more, were for these crimes imprisoned in the year 1340; and the archbishop of Canterbury was disgraced for the same ill conduct in 1341. The severe punishments inflicted by this wise monarch on corrupt judges; the wholesome laws made by him to repress luxury and vice of every kind; his watchful care over our trade and manufactures, and the wise acts of parliament passed by him, for the encouragement and improvement of our staple commodities; the many glorious successes his arms were blessed with abroad, and the happy quiet his subjects enjoyed at home, are all of them so many demonstrations, that this great king was not in the hands of a Prime Minister. But behold the instability of human nature! Edward III. after so long and glorious a reign, was governed in his old age by Alice Pierse, his concubine.

Richard II. son of Edward the Black Prince, and grandson of Edward III. succeeded him in 1377; but by not treading in his steps, lost both his crown and life. He came to the throne with great advantages; the people were enamoured of him, receiving him for their

their king with universal joy and satisfaction ; and the loss of their brave king, so lately deceased, was quite forgotten, being swallowed up by the hopes of that happiness, which they promised themselves under this his successor. Yet the scene was so intirely changed in a few years time, and the taxes grew so insupportable, more from the method of collecting them, than from their quantity, that one rebellion was no sooner quelled, than another broke out. The king himself seemed only to have assumed the government, that he might throw his own power into the hands of a corrupt Prime Minister, Michael de la Pole, earl of Suffolk. He had grown up so suddenly from a poor to a rich estate, by bribery in his office and by embezzling the public money, by grants from the crown to him and his family, and by oppressing the subjects with illegal taxes, for which he afterwards compounded with them in private ; that in the end, the parliament petitioned the king to remove him from his councils ; and the king being in no condition to dispute the point, at length consented to this demand ; and then it appeared how good a prince king Richard was, when separated from evil counsel.

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The guilty minister was with the royal approbation deposed from all his offices ; his estate of 1000 l. a year, equal to 10000 l. now, was confiscated, and he was fined in 20,000 marks. But the poor monarch could not long hold the reins of government himself ; he soon chose another Prime Minister, full as wicked as the former, Robert duke of Ireland. This minister's first step was to screen Michael de la Pole, having persuaded the king to remit his fine and restore him to his estate, and to discountenance those nobles who had procured his disgrace ; insinuating to his deluded sovereign, that the main aim of those nobles, who procured the sentence on Pole, was to dethrone him by disgracing his first minister ; whence this easy inference was drawn, ‘ That the king is not fit to rule, who knows not whom to trust ? ’ By these and such like artifices and arguments, the king was wrought up to the ruin of those lords, whom these bad ministers accounted their enemies. Several projects were formed to destroy them by force ; but the universal love the nation bore them made this impracticable. The minister tried to pack a parliament ; but that too was found impossible, the nation being in a flame against the court. These attempts proving unsuccessful, produced a

civil war, in which the ministerial forces being routed, the duke of Ireland and the earl of Suffolk were both forced to fly from public justice. But the chief tool of their power, Sir Robert Tresilian, being seized, was condemned in parliament, and pursuant to their sentence, drawn through the city of London on a hurdle, and hanged at Tyburn. After this public act of justice, the nation was at quiet for some few years, till the earl of Rutland, afterwards created duke of Aumerle, became Prime Minister. Fearing the fate of his predecessors, he resolved to remove those sturdy patriots out of the way, who had accomplished the ruin of the duke of Ireland and earl of Suffolk. He therefore packed a house of commons by wicked means, and got the earl of Arundel and others to be impeached, condemned and executed. This, and many other acts of oppression, so disgusted the city of London, from whence the disgust spread through the whole kingdom, that every thing was ripe for a civil war. In this condition were affairs, when the Prime Minister, as if designedly to complete his master's ruin, persuaded him to go over to his dominion of Ireland ; where he had no sooner landed, than the duke of Lancaster, with a small body of foreign troops, invaded this kingdom ; and having

having seized upon some of the chief instruments of the minister's tyranny, and put them to death, was by the whole nation received as their deliverer. The king, upon this news, returned from Ireland, with an army sufficient to have maintained his crown, had they adhered to him : but remark the fidelity, that may be expected from all Prime Ministers ! The duke of Aumerle, to whom the present distress of the king's affairs was chiefly owing, was the first that deserted him ; dismissed his best troops, and fled over to the duke of Lancaster, with 500 men. Richard II. was soon after himself betrayed into the hands of his enemy ; deposed from the throne by his parliament, and at last murdered in his prison.

Henry IV. duke of Lancaster, and son of the duke of Lancaster, the king's uncle, who claimed the crown of Castile in right of his wife, and invaded Spain, succeeded him in 1399. As he came to the crown by the people's choice, so he maintained himself in the possession of it, by consulting their interest. He never placed his power out of his own hands. His reign was indeed disturbed by civil wars, which his disputed title, and the burden of necessary taxes drew upon him ; for, as it is commonly observed, people do not love to buy even happiness too dear. But

his wife conduct, the able ministers he employed, and the equality he maintained in the distribution of his favours, with his constant care of the commercial interests and honour of this nation, made him at last a victor over all his enemies, both at home and abroad, and laid the foundation of the greatness and glory of his son,

Henry V. who succeeded him in 1413. During his short but glorious reign, he had no Prime Minister. His counsellors were chosen by him amongst the gravest and wisest of his nobility. He went in progress through many parts of his kingdom, and received all complaints of mal-administration with chearfulness, even from the meanest of his people. All abuses of his authority he immediately reformed, not sparing the greatest of his ministers, when he found them guilty of misdemeanors ; telling them, that since they had no respect to his honour, which was wounded by their injustice, he could have no motive to favour them, but punish them the more severely ; because, for the sake of a little gain or friendship, they had robbed him of what he most valued, his people's love and affection.

Henry VI. was the reverse of his wife and great father, in the whole conduct of his long, weak

weak and turbulent reign, which began in 1422. He had no sooner taken into his hands the power of the government, than he bestowed the whole administration of it on one wicked minister or another, 'till by their means he was deprived of his dignity, liberty and life. William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, his first Prime Minister, was supported in his power by the ascendant the queen had gained over her husband, even after he had conceived a just aversion for him. The oppression of the subject at home, the losses we sustained abroad, and the contempt brought upon our councils, by Suffolk's ignorance and blunders, raised the nation's discontent to the highest pitch. It was no injury, they said, to think of another king, since the present sovereign had depos'd himself in effect, by suffering the queen and Suffolk to over-rule all. The commons at length impeached him for treason, and the lords committed him to the Tower ; but during a recess of parliament, the queen procured his enlargement, and restored him to his former favour. This was so highly resented by the nation, that the court was obliged to banish him, in order to save his life ; but that proved ineffectual ; for the ship, in which he embarked for France, was pursued and taken by another ship, belonging to

the duke of Exeter, and Suffolk himself was beheaded by the captain near Dover sands. The next Prime Minister in this reign was the duke of Somerset, who rose in high favour with the king and queen, ruling and governing all as he pleased. The nation was not in the least disposed to a rebellion against the king, for no harm was meant him, who did no ill to any, and desired the nation's welfare in all things ; but against the queen, the duke of Somerset, and his cabal, who usurped the regal authority. The first attempt the nobles made was on the duke of Somerset, whom they caused to be arrested in the queen's bed-chamber, and sent to the Tower, in order to answer the crimes that should be laid to his charge in the ensuing parliament. Accordingly, he was there accused of high treason ; but by the queen's influence that parliament was dissolved and the duke was set at liberty. Hereupon the nobles rose in arms, and declared for the house of York : the court too raised an army, which was totally defeated ; the king himself was taken prisoner, and the Prime Minister slain in the action. The rest of this reign was one continued scene of civil war, till it ended in the king's murder, and in the transfer of the crown to another family. The character given of this prince in history

history is, ‘ That he might have been as good a king as England ever had, if he had been guided by a wise and good council ; but he was ruled by Favourites and by his queen, whose ambitious assuming the regal power beyond her sphere, made it thought no rebellion to take it out of her hands, and put it where it would be better ordered, and was more due. The king’s fall was much pitied, because, as to his person, undeserved ; but the common good so much required a change, that it was judged better one should suffer an injury, rather than the whole nation perish.’

Edward IV. eldest son of Richard duke of York, ascended the throne in 1461, but was not fully settled in it, 'till his predecessor's murder in 1471. Though perhaps too much addicted to pleasure, he was in the main a wise and able monarch. He never had a Prime Minister; but relied upon the advices of a well chosen council, and on his own abilities. This conduct acquired him a crown, and this recovered it for him, when it was snatched away by the treachery of some, in whom he most confided: for he was defeated by the earl of Warwick and made prisoner, and king Henry remounted the throne; but escaping beyond sea, he invaded England, and again obtained possession of the

kingdom. As his own good capacity always led him into the measures that were most conducive to the honour and interest of the kingdom, so also it made him in general more an object of the people's affections, than was to be expected in a time of such confusion and bloodshed. The only weakness of his reign, and as Sir Thomas More observes, by which occasion was given after his death, to the usurpation of his brother Richard, was his over fondness for the queen; at whose importunity he promoted her friends, beyond what either their birth or abilities could entitle them to; by which the ancient nobility and the great commoners were disengaged.

Edward V. eldest son of Edward IV. by the bad politics of his father, lost both his crown and life. He had reigned but two months and thirteen days, when he was imprisoned by his uncle, the duke of Gloucester, who usurped his throne, and murdered both him and his brother Richard, duke of York.

Richard III. the youngest son of Richard the first duke of York, began his short reign in 1483. There was no instance of a Prime Minister under him, unless Stafford, duke of Buckingham, may deserve that title. He it was, who first set the crown on this Usurper's head;

head ; but either he was not gratified, according to his expectation, or else he was apprehensive that his master could not long maintain his ill-acquired dignity ; for he soon after engaged in a conspiracy against him, which proved fatal to them both ; for the duke was taken and beheaded as a traytor, without any legal process, by the king's bare order. But the storm he had raised, was not to be quelled, but by the death of the usurper, who was killed at the battle of Bosworth, by Henry, earl of Richmond, who thereupon was proclaimed king in the field of battle.

Henry VII. began his reign in 1485. He was descended from John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, the fourth son of Edward III. He married Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward IV. and thereby united the houses of York and Lancaster. He was indeed too prudent a prince, to trust his whole power in the hands of any one minister ; and yet he often gave more authority to a few, than was consistent either with his great sagacity, or his interest. An unhappy love of money frequently betrayed him into this mistake in government, and made him rather employ the base instruments of gratifying that passion, than those, who were better qualified for the real service of the state. To this unpopular

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foible, in a British sovereign, were owing many of those insurrections, which, under a weaker politician, must have ended in destruction. The oppressive subsidy in 1489, though granted in parliament, caused a rebellion in the North, in which the chief promoter of the tax, the earl of Northumberland, fell a sacrifice to popular resentment. Another parliamentary aid in 1496, was so grievous to the Cornish men, that they rose in arms, to oppose the levying it; and after some success in the West, marched in a body on to London, and came as far as Blackheath, where they encountered the royal forces in a pitched battle. Towards the latter end of this reign, the king's love of money increasing with his age, Empson and Dudley, those leeches of the people, as lord Bacon calls them, built their greatness upon their singular talents of devising new methods how to raise money; in which they so cruelly squeezed and oppressed the subjects, whilst the king's coffers abounded with treasure which he could not use, that in the end the whole kingdom was disposed to rebel. It was therefore one of the felicities of this reign, that an opportune death withdrew the king from any future blow of fortune; which certainly, in regard of the great hatred of his people,

had not been impossible to have come upon him.

Henry VIII. his second and only surviving son, succeeded to the crown in 1509. He found no other methods of recalling the lost affections of his subjects, but by giving up to public justice those two wicked ministers Empson and Dudley ; who, being guilty of that very worst of treasons, ‘ alienating the people’s hearts from their sovereign,’ were beheaded on the 18th of August 1510. This wise act procured the new king the whole nation’s love ; which he preserved for many years, ‘till the oppressive conduct of his own Prime Minister, Wolsey, staggered their loyalty. The character of this ambitious statesman has been so often set forth in all its colours, that it need only be observed, that he engaged his master in many fruitless and inglorious expeditions abroad, which sunk the honour as much as they drained the treasure of the nation ; that he was so insolent as to usurp the regal style, seldom speaking of his master’s actions, but under the title ; ‘ We did so, or I and the king ;’ that he sold his sovereign’s alliance, by turns, to every potentate in Europe, ‘till at length there was scarce a prince left, who thought it worth the purchasing ; and last of all, that he accumulated

so vast an estate, as to form a project of making himself independent of the crown. His character may be summed up with what a noble writer of those times, the lord Herbert, says : ‘ One error was, that he and his were invested with a hateful multiplicity of offices and places ; which as it drew much envy on the cardinal in particular, so it derogated not a little from the regal authority, while one man alone seemed to exhaust it all. Since it becometh princes to do, like good husbandmen, when they sow the ground, which is to scatter, and not throw all in one place. The disgrace and imprisonment of this overgrown monster of power, for which he died of grief, soon recovered the straying affections of the people, who were never more effectually gained, than by such a sacrifice ; but this happy turn lasted not long.’ The popular discontents were revived by the many changes in religion, and by the exorbitant power thrown into the hands of Cromwell, who was made privy-seal, lord-chamberlain, knight of the garter, and vicegerent-general in spirituals. To him lord Herbert attributes the taxes in 1536, which occasioned a most formidable rebellion in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, and other parts ; and consisted of no less than 30,000 men, who were not dispersed, but upon

upon promise of calling a free parliament. To him he likewise attributes the heavy taxes in 1539, which he says, ‘ equally oppressed both the clergy and the laity ; and made the author of them so universally hated, that the king gave way to the accusations against him ; and then it was evident he must fall. For it was impossible that one, who meddled so much in all the great and public affairs, should not in several so mistake and err, as to incur the note of a criminal, when inquisitions were made against him. The disgrace and imprisonment of Cromwell was received by the people with many acclamations, that witnessed their joy ; so impatient are they usually of the good fortune of Favourites. And all former faults being imputed to him, every one began to hope for a better age. He was attainted in parliament of crimes great and enormous, and such as deserved capital punishment ; but as he was not permitted to answer for himself, the proceedings were thought rigorous ; but so few pitied him, that all was passed over, and he was executed on Tower-hill in July 1540.’ The rest of this reign, as it was free from any Prime Minister, so it was likewise from rebellions. Sir Walter Raleigh sums up the character of king Henry VIII. in a few words of peculiar poignancy,

poignancy, ‘ That if all the pictures and patterns of a merciless prince were lost to the world, they might again be painted to the life out of the history of this king.’ But to soften the deformity of this pourtrait, let us view him in the more advantageous light, in which he is drawn by his historian, lord Herbert, who observes, that his bitterest censurers agree, that he had all manner of perfections, either of nature or education, and a deep judgment in all affairs, to which he applied himself; that he was liberal and indulgent to his family and court, and even to strangers; that he made choice of able and good men for the church, and of wise and grave counsellors for the state; and, above all, was a prince of royal courage: in short, that, with all his faults, he was courted by the chief potentates of Christendom, and highly reverenced by his subjects in general.

Edward VI. succeeded his father Henry VIII. in 1547. During his short reign of minority, he had no less than two Prime Ministers. The first was the duke of Somerset, who, though uncle to the king, and protector of the kingdom by election, could not avoid the fate, that in this country naturally attends on too much power, when vested in the hands of one subject. The engrossing
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the regal authority was his chief crime. This raised insurrections through the kingdom; this united the chief of the nobility against him; this procured his imprisonment in the Tower in 1549; and lost him his head in 1552. The ambitious author of his ruin, the duke of Northumberland, succeeded him in power, and soon became the object of the nation's hatred. He even contrived to fix the crown upon a lady, who had married into his own family; and when he brought his royal master to consent to that settlement, he was strongly suspected to have poisoned him. Sir John Hayward and Godwin both agree, that this suspicion was founded on no trivial conjectures. The former of these writer says, ' the people left nothing unspoken, which might serve to stir hatred against Northumberland, and pity towards the king; but the duke was nothing moved hereat; for being equally obstinate, both in purpose and desire, and mounting his hopes above the pitch of reason, he resolved then to dissemble no longer, but began openly to play his game; a game, for which he justly lost his head in the succeeding reign.'

Mary I. only daughter of king Henry VIII. by Catherine of Spain, succeeded her brother Edward in 1553. She had in her short reign

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but one Prime Minister, Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, who made the nation a scene of blood and desolation, in order to obtain for himself a cardinal's hat. For this purpose, he promoted and accomplished that hateful Spanish match, which, had it proved fruitful, must have made this island a province dependent on Spain. It met with the universal disapprobation of the people, and raised a rebellion ; which, but for an accidental disappointment, had probably overturned the whole government. This avowed disgust occasioned those articles in the treaty of marriage, whereby the liberties of this kingdom were secured, as much as words could secure against power. Gardiner's blundering politics, in contriving so unnatural an alliance, soon involved the nation in a war with France, in which we lost that important harbour of Calais ; a loss, which so affected the poor deluded queen, as to be the immediate occasion of her death.

Elizabeth, the only daughter of Henry VIII. by Anne Bullen, succeeded her half sister queen Mary, in 1558. In her long, wise and glorious reign, not one Prime Minister appeared. Her people's love was the strong basis of her government, as their interest was the only drift of her councils.

Camden says, ‘ On all, whom she ever admitted into her ministry, she bestowed her favours with so much caution and so little distinction, as to prevent any from getting the ascendant over her ; whereby she remained mistress of herself, preserving their affections, and her own power and authority entire.’ Upon this maxim she always modelled her ministry ; therefore, in 1568, she protected Cecil, afterwards lord Burleigh, even against her greatest personal Favourite, the earl of Leicester, who with other lords had conspired his overthrow ; and some years after, she as firmly supported Leicester against the artifices of Cecil. She sent the earl of Leicester in 1586, to assist the Dutch against the king of Spain. He was thereupon chosen governor of the United Provinces ; but no sooner did the states complain of him for abusing his great power, but this just queen recalled her Favourite with disgrace. The person, whom she next honoured with the highest marks of her favour, was the earl of Essex ; but when he began to affect a superiority over his fellow-ministers, assuming more authority than his mistress intended for his share, she openly curbed his overweening ambition ; turned him out of his employments, and called him to an account for his conduct in them. This aspiring

aspiring statesman hereupon entered into cabals against her measures, in order to force himself into place. His principal scheme for this purpose was, it is commonly said, by contriving a rupture between the queen and the next heir to the crown ; which proving abortive, he was at last constrained to undergo the just punishment of his traitorous conspiracies. This affair is set in a quite different light by others, as if he wanted to wrest the sceptre out of her hands which she had intended for him.

It was the happiness of this queen to be always served by able and faithful ministers, and this may be said to be principally owing to her own capacity which furnished her with extraordinary lights of nice and acute discernment into the genius and talents of those she made choice of for her service. Hence, all offices, as well civil as military, were filled up under her with men equal to the duties of their employments ; and if we should find some not altogether unexceptionable, we may attribute it to mere favour, as favour like love, is generally blind, and may admit the unworthy as well as worthy to its carelessness. William Cecil, lord Burleigh, was a man of extraordinary worth and abilities, and was so formed by nature, and

so polished by education, that for all the qualities of a statesman, adorned with all the virtues of a private man and a christian, he had no superior; and was one of those few, who both lived and died with glory. He discharged the post of lord high treasurer of England, with great fidelity and applause, and considerably augmented the public revenue and his own private fortune, though he abhorred the base and corrupt methods of amassing riches; for he seldom or never suffered any thing to be expended but for the queen's honour, the security of the nation, or the support of its allies. He used to say, that he never cared to see the treasury swell like a disordered spleen, while the other parts of the commonwealth were in a consumption. And he employed all possible means, and with good success, to enrich the queen and the kingdom by his administration; it being a common expression with him that nothing could be for the advantage of a prince, which in any measure lessens his reputation: for which reason he never suffered the rents of lands to be raised, nor the old tenants to be ejected. He was highly respected by the nobility, and endeavoured always to advance men of merit. He was mild in his answers to persons of all ranks; and took particular

care to prefer valuable men in the church and in the posts of law. He was kind to his friends, gentle to his enemies, averse to pomp, temperate in diet, and impenetrably secret.

—Sir Nicholas Bacon, lord-keeper of the great seal during a great part of her reign, was the first in that office, who had all the dignity of a lord chancellor conferred on him; and his not being raised to that high title perhaps flowed from that modesty, which he retained amidst all his greatness, equal to what the ancient Greeks and Romans had carried with them to their highest advancement. He was a man of very penetrating genius, singular prudence, and admirable eloquence. He understood his mistress well, and the times better. He could raise factions to serve the one, and allay them to suit the other. He had the deepest reach into affairs of any man at the council-table; the acutest head to penetrate into difficulties; the most comprehensive judgment to determine the merits of a cause; the strongest memory to recollect all circumstances of a business at one view; the greatest patience to debate and consider; and the clearest reason to urge any thing, that came in his way, in council or chancery. His correspondence with his fellow-statesmen was exact; his apprehension of our laws and

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government clear ; his model of both methodical ; and his industry for the service of the state indefatigable.—The queen's secretary of state, Sir Francis Walsingham, was one of the most refined politicians and most penetrating statesmen, that ever any age produced. He had an admirable talent both in discovering and managing the secret recesses of human nature : he had his spies in most courts in Christendom, and allowed them a liberal maintenance ; for his grand maxim was, that ‘ knowledge is never too dear.’ He spent his whole time and faculties in the service of the queen and her kingdoms ; on which account her majesty was heard to say, that ‘ in diligence and sagacity he exceeded her expectation.’ *Video & taceo*, was his saying, before it was his mistress’s motto. He could as well fit the humour of king James of Scotland with passages out of Xenophon, Thucydides, Plutarch, or Tacitus, as he could that of king Henry of France with Rabelais’s conceits, or the Hollander with mechanic discourses. He served himself of the court factions as the queen did, neither advancing the one, nor depressing the other. His conversation was insinuating and yet reserved. He saw every man, and none saw him. ‘ His spirit, says Mr. Lloyd, was as public as his

parts ; yet as debonnaire as he was prudent, and as obliging to the softer but predominant parts of the world, as he was serviceable to the more severe, and no less dextrous to work on humours, than to convince reason. He would say, he must observe the joints and flexures of affairs ; and so could do more with a story, than others could with an harangue. He always surprized business, and preferred motions in the heat of other diversions ; and if he must debate it, he would hear all, and with the advantage of foregoing speeches, that either cautioned or confirmed his resolutions, he carried all before him in conclusion, without reply. To him men's faces spoke as much as their tongues, and their countenances were indexes of their hearts. He would so beset men with questions, and draw them on, that they discovered themselves, whether they answered or were silent. Few letters escaped his hands ; and he could read their contents, without touching the seals.—More examples might be produced, but these will be sufficient to shew what able ministers were employed by queen Elizabeth ; yet none of them were ever in quality of Prime Ministers, nor had any of them ever such an ascendant as to dispose of matters

matters arbitrarily to the prejudice of other ministers and of the state.

Some are apt to censure queen Elizabeth's conduct, for making it a rule of her government to set at variance the principal men of the realm, and so give birth to cabals and parties, according to the absurd counsel of Machiavel, *si vis regnare, divide.* This, 'tis certain, considered in the worst light it is generally seen in, is a scheme of bad politics; and Philip de Comines, an eminent statesman, blamed greatly those princes, who seek not to compose dissentions and quarrels amongst their greatest subjects, but rather nourish them by favouring one party more than another, whereby they contribute to the setting of their own house on fire: but queen Elizabeth, as may appear from what has been above said, never favoured one particular party more than another, always taking care to balance one faction by the other, and to keep both at the same time attached to her interest and that of the nation. In the decline of life, when she found herself incapacitated to preserve this just equipoise, it proved the cause, and nothing else, of that bitter grief, which hastened her death.

The blow, past recalling, she struck at her own authority, by cutting off Essex, alienated to so great a degree the people's affections

from her, that all she did after was thought bitter, and her government too peevish and womanish for so warlike a nation : nor did she decline less in the opinion of the court itself, no counsel daring after to appear, but what was suitable to the taste and inclinations of the Cecils. And here it may be noted, with what circumspection princes ought to play their game, since ministers, their card-holders, not unfrequently aim at being arrant cheats, and intend more particularly their own benefit than their masters. This appeared in the removal of Essex, a man thought far more necessary to the queen's service, and England's safety, than those who contrived his ruin ; because the still bandying about of two factions, as it had been the constant former practice of this reign, was the most probable way to keep the queen, now grown old, from falling into contempt. The commands, which under both parties would have been readily obeyed, were after one had secured the uncontrolled management of affairs, wholly neglected ; so that it was not possible for this once bright constellation, so near its declension, to influence another party, none having courage enough to run the hazard of an inevitable future ruin upon the contemplation of a year or two's power ; which was more than
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her age and present weakness did with any probability promise.

It is now evident, that it would have been much better policy in the queen, to have made a concession of the earl's life to the fears and wishes of the people, whereby their love must have been not only preserved intire, but what was of more consequence, so great a restraint must have been put upon the opposite cabal, as was likely to contain them within the compass of obedience ; and this oversight was the more inexcusable, because the ancestors of the earl's chieffest enemies had by the same arts rendered her ungrateful to the people of England, in a like case of severity towards the duke of Norfolk. Thus it was that she did not apprehend till it was too late, the wound given her own power by the death of Essex ; and thus we may easily account for her not being able ever after, to moderate the insolence of those, who made no scruple of slighting her, and dinging openly in her ears the necessity she lay under, to declare the Scots king her successor, lest the parliament should for their own safety, be compelled to do it themselves. But the principal, if not the only point of view herein, was to endear king James the more to some particular families, of which the most noble for birth,

found afterwards little cause to applaud their design. Nor did this stroke of fatality terminate in the ruin of the earl's friends alone, but extended to the disadvantage of his maligners themselves, witness Sir Walter Ralegh, who wanting strength, tho' not wit, to be the rival of Robert Cecil, the great lord Burleigh's son and successor in power, perished, because not supposed to have humility enough to be his servant ; it being more safe at court to have many enemies of equal power, than one false ambitious friend, who has attained to absolute command. Agitations and tempests will arise from considerable factions in the courts of princes ; but by counteracting one another, all bad effects will gradually blow over, and a calm will at last ensue, one party still thinking it honourable to preserve and advance what the other deems safe to suppress and destroy. This Ralegh was often heard to say he was not apprehensive of, till his genius, like that of Socrates, had dictated it to him, as he was coming in a boat from the execution of the earl of Essex at the Tower ; nor could the wisest of his endeavours rescue him from the dire effects of this portent, or to name it more properly, a necessary cause of such events, as afterwards befell him.

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The death of Essex did then like the gloom of a melancholy-bringing cloud, shade the prospect of the people's affection, from being so discernable at the setting of the queen's days, as it was during the dawn and meridian of her reign : yet, if Essex had been tryed by a peerage of angels, they would have passed a like sentence upon him, or exposed monarchy to contempt. Prudence therefore cannot lay the fault at the door of her justice, but the ill management of her mercy, as not knowing how to employ it to the best advantage of her future affairs ; and though some may still imagine no defect in her conduct, we may possibly learn to wonder, why she did not make a better provision against contempt, 'till that hour a mere stranger to her, who before had been continually spirited up with flattery or success.

There's another blot on this reign, with which the queen's prudence has been often upbraided. This is the manner of removing Mary queen of Scots. The skill or spirit of doing it in a clandestine way would have been more eligible. Whence, little thanks are due to those who made the nation accessary by so solemn a tryal to the death of her they meant next to set up as rightful heir to the crown. The undoubted desires and importunities of

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the Scots to have her put to death, the better to facilitate the succession of their king James, cannot justify the want of discretion in the English nation, much less wipe away the shame of the act, which to haughty republicans seemed afterwards as a good precedent for trampling on majesty in the person of Charles I. And if king James had indulged a little more his honour than his pusillanimity, he would not, when he might have had it in his power, have passed by unrevenged those houses that were so opprobriously stained with her blood.

However, nothing more commends the goodness even of the latter part of queen Elizabeth's reign, than that she and her subjects should have one and the same minion, as happened in Essex. The subjects were prepossessed with a confidence in her, that she could not countenance an unworthy man; and it was no small advance to the completing of this general approbation, that the people appeared not at the cost to raise him, it being the custom of this frugal princess to let her Favourites taste and not to surfeit on the wealth of the nation. The names of monopolies and odious taxes were not intelligible to experience all her days; neither were her ears stopped against her people's complaints, ever

ever thought by her just, and therefore proper to receive an immediate redress ; and this was the cause that her parliaments were no further inquisitive than she was pleased to inform them.

Had her successors, the Stuarts, retained the like moderation, their power would not have been brought to the test of the long and sharp conflicts it passed through ; and it was even questioned in the reign of king James I. whether that which supported queen Elizabeth's power, would not, by his misapplication of it, utterly ruin his successors. This is a point that will be set in a proper light, when the subject of the Revolution falls under consideration. But as to queen Elizabeth, to sum up all in a few words, she was not only fortunate in her conduct at home, but able to diffuse peace and plenty over such neighbouring nations, as she was advised by true reasons of state to maintain in strength, and in a thriving and respectable condition.

James I. king of Scots, succeeded this great queen in 1603. We find it no where ascertained that he was ever nominated by queen Elizabeth, as her successor. During her reign there were no less than fourteen titles, good and bad, which by her silence were all kept quiet. For 'till she made a public declaration,

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none had just cause to complain ; and in case any endeavoured to have succeeded by force, she had a fair choice out of the rest to make opposition, not one being free from some considerable defect or other. The parliament remained intirely at her devotion : the commons were averse to a stranger, or rather dreaded the consequences of such a choice ; the peers were jealous of the house of Harford, or any person deducible out of their own body. 'Tis true, Essex bade fairest for the crown ; the wishes of the nation in general favoured him, seconded very probably by those of the queen, till his indiscretion had withdrawn the pleasing smiles of fortune she seemed to have treasured up for him alone. The title of king James by blood was undoubtedly the best, as being descended from the eldest daughter of Henry VII. but this title was set aside by Henry VIII. who being impowered to limit the succession of the crown by act of parliament, settled it on the issue of his youngest sister Mary, by Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, in case his two daughters Mary and Elizabeth died without issue.

But, as it is not the intent of this tract to enter into a discussion, whether king James ascended the throne of England in virtue of
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his title, or by the procurement of the Cecil's faction ; it will be enough to observe for the present purpose, that tho' he was too weak to tread in queen Elizabeth's steps, yet he reaped many happy benefits from her just administration ; which had created in the minds of the whole nation such an habitual reverence for the throne, as all his bad policy could never quite extinguish.

His was, in truth, the reign of Prime Ministers. Sir Robert Car was the first, who, for some time, was forced to share in power with Cecil, earl of Salisbury ; and so long affairs were tolerably well conducted ; but upon Cecil's death, Sir Robert took full possession of the king's favours alone ; receiving all packets, and dispatching answers, without the knowledge of the king or council ; or, if the king did know, he seemed regardless of the consequences, his love having hoarded up such a confidence in him, that he laid out all on that stock. Secure of this love, the minion grasped at all employments, not caring whom he disengaged, or what enemies he created for himself : nor would he suffer any place at court, or dignity in state, to be bestowed, which was not sweetened with his smile, as giving it, or their bounty, who were to enjoy it. So that by his many foul devices,

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and by his scandalous sale of offices, it was thought he engrossed a mass of money, as if his soul intended to take her ease. This and his other miscarriages procured him such a number of underminers, that he stood upon a tottering foundation, having no support but the royal favour, which was at last removed by laying before the king his crying guilt in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. The king consented to his trial, and many of his creatures were put to death for their share in his offences ; but he himself, to the no small discredit of his master, or rather an eternal blemish upon his justice, was only confined to an obscure retreat, in which he languished out his days, without that public punishment which he deserved. He also lay under the most odious imputations of having occasioned the death of Henry prince of Wales ; at least that event was thought by him so favourable to his authority, that he could scarce disguise his little concern for it.

The next Prime Minister, was George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, raised from a low estate by the king's favour upon no other account than the comeliness of his person. For many years he was sole governor of all affairs, and enriched himself and all his relations with places, pensions and grants
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from the crown ; for which he soon after rewarded his bountiful master in the manner which may be expected from all such Favourites. The king had set his heart upon a match between his son and the infanta of Spain, which was justly odious to the whole nation ; Buckingham therefore, who knew how universally he was detested, resolved to become popular at the expence of his master's honour, by opposing all his measures in this affair. He first proposed to the prince a journey into Spain, which he afterwards forced the king to consent to ; and this, as lord Clarendon says, proved the means, whereby that designed marriage, which had been so many years in treaty, was solely broken ; for, upon their return, the king found that the prince was totally alienated from all thoughts of, or inclination to the marriage ; and that he, as well as the duke, was resolved to break it, without his approbation or consent ? The duke therefore, seconded by the countenance the prince gave him, engaged the parliament to address the king against the Spanish match, and to enter into a war with Spain. He likewise projected the ruin of the earl of Middlesex, then lord treasurer, and one of the king's most favoured ministers ; which he accomplished, by procuring some leading men

men in the house of commons to carry up an impeachment against that lord to the house of peers ; and there conducting matters so, as to get him to be condemned to a large fine, and long imprisonment. And now knowing the king would never forgive him, he resolved to keep his power in spite of him ; which he found no other means of effecting, but by fomenting a breach between the king and prince, and engaging the son to head the opposition to his father's measures. The vexation this gave the old monarch, meeting with an aguish disposition in his blood, soon turned it into a violent fever, of which he died ; not without strong suspicion of his being poisoned by a plaster, which Buckingham applied to his side. And this suspicion was the more confirmed, it being well known, as lord Clarendon says, ‘ That when king James was informed what the duke had so confidently avowed in parliament, for which he had not authority, or the least direction from him, and a great part whereof himself knew to be false ; and that he had advised an utter breach of the treaty ; and to enter upon a war with Spain, he was infinitely offended. So that he only wanted a resolute and brisk counsellor to assist him in destroying the duke ; and such an one he promised himself in the earl

of Bristol, whom he expected every day.' No wonder then if the poor king did not long survive the earl of Bristol's return to England.

Charles I. succeeded him in 1625. ' He came to the crown, as lord Clarendon says, with as universal a joy in the people, as can be imagined. It was expected by those, who knew the great jealousy and indignation that the prince had heretofore conceived against the duke of Buckingham, for having been once very near striking him, that he would now remember that insolence, of which he then so often complained. But, instead of that, he placed his intire confidence in him, the most that ever king had shewed to any subject. All preferments in the church and state were given by him ; all his kindred and his friends were promoted to the degree in honour, riches, and offices, that he thought fit, and all his enemies and enviers were dis- countenanced, as he appointed. This soon wrought a visible change in the affections of the nation towards their sovereign.' The fruitless expeditions abroad, and the oppres- sive methods of raising money at home, joined to the innate hatred this nation bears to Prime Ministers, raised a discontent against the go- vernment. In 1628, Sir Edward Coke, lord

chief justice of England, having in parliament proposed and framed the Petition of Rights, and having also vindicated the rights of the house of commons, to proceed against any subject, how high soever, who misled his sovereign to the prejudice of his subjects, made a memorable speech to the following effect: ‘ We have dealt with that duty and moderation, that never was the like, *rebus sic stantibus*, after such a violation of the liberties of the subjects: let us take this to heart. In 30 Ed. III. were they then in doubt, in parliament, to name men that misled the king? They accused John de Gaunt, the king’s son, and lord Latimer and lord Nevil, for misadvising the king, and they went to the Tower for it. Now, when there is such a downfal of the state, shall we hold our tongues? How shall we answer our duties to God and men? 7 Hen. IV. Parl. Rot. N° 31, 32. and 11 Hen. IV. N° 13. there the council are complained of, are removed from the king; they mewed up the king, and dissuaded him from the common good; and why are we now retired from that way we were in? Why may we not name those that are the cause of all our evils? In 4 Hen. III. and in 27 Ed. III. and 13 R. II. the parliament moderateth the king’s prerogative; and nothing grows to abuse, but

but this house hath power to treat of. What shall we do? Let us palliate no longer; if we do, God will not prosper us. I think the duke of Buckingham is the cause of all our miseries; and, 'till the king be informed thereof, we shall never go out with honour, nor sit with honour here; that man is the grievance of grievances; let us set down the causes of all our disasters, and all will reflect upon him?' This speech was seconded by Mr. Selden, and at length it was agreed to frame a remonstrance to the king, and therein to name the duke of Buckingham, as the great author of their grievances. Accordingly, a remonstrance was drawn up, full of duty and respect to the king, as well as zeal and fidelity to the public, in which the duke of Buckingham, and the bishops Neale and Laud, are expressly named, as the authors of those calamities which the nation felt at that time. However, the king, impatient of all proceedings against him, dissolved the parliament; but the duke soon after, when he was meditating to repair the disgrace of his shameful defeat at the isle of Rhee, by embarking for the relief of Rochelle, then besieged by the French, was assassinated at Portsmouth by one John Felton, who committed that fact without any other inducement or encouragement,

than what the belief, that he should do God and his country good service by destroying an enemy to both, inspired him with. The popular writers of those times are not backward in saying, that Felton was excited to what he did, by some demon, if not the genius of our nation.

The death of this Prime Minister and Favourite, the news of which was acceptable almost every where it came, was far from allaying the ferment the nation was in. Lord Clarendon himself says, ‘ The venom of this time encreased and got vigour, ’till from one licence to another it proceeded, until the nation was corrupted to that monstrous degree, that it grew satiated and weary of the government.’ Indeed, continuing the same measures, this Prime Minister had set on foot, till the liberties of the nation were thought in danger ; and in the end, listening almost intirely to the counsel of Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, brought on that dismal scene of blood and confusion, in which the king was unhappily deprived of his crown, liberty, and life.

The earl of Strafford, from a busy stickler for liberty, became the instrument of arbitrary power. When he first served in parliament, he constantly appeared in opposition to
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the interests of the court. In May 1627, he was committed a prisoner to the Marshalsea by the lords of the council for refusing the royal loan ; and about six weeks after this imprisonment, confined at Dartford in Kent, but released about the Christmas following. In the parliament of 1628, he exerted himself with great vigour against the administration of the government, insisting upon the Petition of Rights, and proposing, what passed into a resolution of the house, that the redress of grievances, and the granting of supplies, should go hand in hand. However, at the end of that parliament, he was reconciled to the duke of Buckingham, and consequently to the measures of the court, to which he became firmly attached, and was constantly afterwards the greatest zealot for advancing the power of the crown. His conduct in Ireland was so satisfactory to the king, that he was advanced to the dignity of lord lieutenant of that kingdom, and that of earl of Strafford; and, in September 1640, was elected a knight of the garter. But this distinction was a very short-lived satisfaction to him ; for, upon the meeting of the parliament in November following, he was impeached of high treason, and committed to the Tower. His trial was the most solemn that was ever known,

and lasted eighteen days; during which he defended himself with such address, that the commons doubting, whether the lords would give judgment against him, passed a bill for attainting him of high treason, which went through the house of peers likewise; and at last was consented to, tho' with extreme reluctance by the king, who signed a commission for passing it. He was beheaded on Tower-hill on the 12th of May, 1641. Lord Clarendon acknowledges, that the earl in his government of Ireland, had been compelled, by reason of state, to exercise many acts of power, and had indulged some to his own appetite and passion; and as he was a man of too high and severe a deportment, and too great a contemner of ceremony to have many friends at court, so he could not but have enemies enough. ‘ But he was a man, continues that noble historian, of great parts and extraordinary endowments of nature, not unadorned with some addition of art and learning, though that again was more improved and illustrated by the other; for he had a readiness of conception, and sharpness of expression, which made his learning thought more, than in truth it was. He was no doubt of great observation, and a piercing judgment, both in things and persons; but his too great skill

skill in persons made him judge the worse of things ; for it was his misfortune to live in a time, wherein very few wise men were equally employed with him, and scarce any, but the lord Coventry, (whose trust was more confined) whose faculties and abilities were equal to his. So that, upon the matter, he relied wholly upon himself ; and discerning many defects in most men, he too much neglected what they said or did. Of all his passions pride was most predominant ; which a moderate exercise of ill fortune might have corrected and reformed, and which the hand of heaven strangely punished, by bringing his destruction upon him by two things that he most despised, the people, and Sir Harry Vane. In a word, the epitaph which Plutarch records that Sylla wrote for himself, may not unfitly be applied to him, ‘ That no man did ever exceed him, either in doing good to his friends, or in doing mischief to his enemies ;’ for his acts of both kinds were most notorious.’

It appears from the occurrences of the earl of Strafford’s trial, how hateful the measures of the court were at the meeting of this parliament. Every thing unpopular, unjust, and odious had been put in practice, in order to be able to do without parliaments, and to rule

by will and pleasure. Those who had suffered for their opposition to injustice and tyranny, were now the favourites of the people. They were applauded and caressed every where ; nor could any with safety open their mouths against them. In this temper were the people when Charles I. by dire necessity, was compelled to call this memorable parliament ; a parliament, ever to be celebrated and admired by the lovers of liberty, for its resolution, firmness, and public spirit. The people rejoiced ; they hoped the time was now come when they might utter their grievances with impunity, and expect redress. Accordingly, for the most part, they took great care in the choice of their representatives, as esteeming it of the utmost importance to their religion and liberties. Whoever hoped for the honour of a seat in parliament must, at least have promised fair, and appeared hearty in the cause of his country. Men of this character were not wanting ; and though some friends to tyranny, and future apostates, found means to enter, the majority were honest and upright, of fair intentions and firm resolutions. ---Lord Clarendon speaking of them, says, ‘ In the house of commons were many persons of wisdom and gravity, who being possessed of great and plentiful fortunes, though they

they were undevoted enough to the court, had all imaginable duty for the king, and affection for the government established by law or ancient custom ; and, without doubt, the major part of that body consisted of men who had no mind to break the peace of the kingdom, or to make any considerable alteration in the government of church or state ; and therefore all inventions were set on foot from the beginning to work on them and corrupt them, by suggestions “ of the dangers which threatened all that was precious to the subject in their liberty and their property, by overthrowing or overmastering the law, and subjecting it to an arbitrary power, and by countenancing popery to the subversion of the protestant religion ;” and then, by infusing terrible apprehensions into some, and so working upon their fears “ of being called in question for somewhat they had done, by which they would stand in need of their protection ;” and raising the hopes of others, “ that, by concurring with them, they should be sure to obtain offices, and honours, and any kind of preferment.” Though there were too many corrupted and misled by these several temptations, and others who needed no other temptations than from the fierceness of their own natures, and the malice they had

contracted against the church and against the court ; yet the number was not great of those in whom the government of the rest was vested, nor were there many who had the absolute authority to lead, though there was a multitude disposed to follow.' What their views and designs were, the same author tells us,—' There was observed a marvellous elated countenance in many of the members of parliament before they met together in the house; the same men, who six months before, were observed to be of very moderate tempers, and to wish that gentle remedies might be applied, without opening the wound too wide, and exposing it to the air, and rather to cure what was amiss, than too strictly to make inquisition into the causes and original of the malady, talked now in another dialect both of things and persons ; and said that they must now be of another temper than they were the last parliament ; that they must not only sweep the house clean below, but must pull down all the cobwebs which hung in the top and corners, that they might not breed dust, and so make a foul house hereafter ; that they had now an opportunity to make their country happy, by removing all grievances, and pulling up the causes of them by the roots, if all men would do their duties ; and used

used much other sharp discourse to the same purpose.'—And what is there marvellous in this? These men had by very late and fresh experience, found that the king was obstinately bent on his old courses, cherished the same tools of tyranny, hated the sons of freedom, and even dared to imprison men for doing their duty in parliament: I say, they lately had new proofs of it, and therefore were not to be blamed for their sharp discourse or sharper actions.

Immediately, on the opening of this parliament, we find great complaints made of grievances, not only by Mr. Pymme (alone mentioned by lord Clarendon, who has confounded the business of grievances with lord Strafford's affair) but also by Mr. Capel, afterwards lord Capel, Sir Henry Bellasis, Sir John Wray, Sir Hugh Cholmely, Sir Philip Musgrave, Sir Francis Seymour, Sir John Packington, Sir Thomas Barrington, Sir John Colepepper, and others. The grievances were threefold; 1. Some against the privilege of parliament; 2. Others to the prejudice of religion; and 3. Another sort against the liberty of the subject. These were enlarged on with no unnatural warmth; their illegality and hardships manifested; the instruments of oppression pointed out, and their demerits dis-

displayed ; and remedies for removing the grievances were proposed ; by declaring the law where it was doubtful, and providing for the execution of the law where it was clear. And to the honour of the house of commons, it must be said, that they went briskly to work, and accomplish'd many of their good intentions, uninfluenced by hope, unawed by fear. They impeached the king's chief ministers, Strafford (as abovementioned) and Laud, and brought them deservedly to the block ; they declared the judgment of the judges to be false and illegal ; they abolished those vile courts of the High Commission and Star-Chamber, in which so many oppressive and cruel sentences had been passed ; they gave liberty to those in captivity for their opposition to the prelates ; they provided for the frequency of parliaments, the disuse of which had given boldness to the courtiers ; they clipt the wings of the ecclesiastics, and brought them nearer to their first institution ; and they would have done many other things, equally useful to that age and posterity, had they not been deserted by some, opposed by others, and hindered by royal authority. But they continued their endeavours notwithstanding, and, for the public good, exposed their fortunes, themselves, and their posterity, to the

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civil war, in which, had they been overcome, they would all have been treated as traitors and rebels. Mr. Neville had reason then for characterizing them, at least twenty or thirty of them, ‘as men of high and unquestionable reputation, who having stood their ground in seven parliaments before, which in the two last reigns, [this was wrote in the time of Charles II.] had been dissolved abruptly and in wrath, and having resisted the fear of imprisonment and great fines for their love to England, as well as the temptation of money and offices to betray it, both inferred by the wicked counsellors of that age, tending both to the ruin of our just rights, and the detriment of their master’s affairs ; I say, having constantly, and with great magnanimity and honour, made proof of their integrity, they had acquired so great a reputation, that not only the parliament, but even almost the whole people, stuck to and were swayed by them.’

That there was a glorious band of patriots in the house of commons, in the beginning of the long parliament, is too evident to be denied ; but their after-proceedings were unsuitable to these glorious beginnings, and they are justly represented by Milton, and others of their own writers, as black, odious and detest-

detestable. Elated by prosperity, influenced by the priesthood, ensnared by wealth and power, or heated by opposition, it is very possible many things were done by them which can never be justified, tho' allowances be made for times of disorder and confusion ; more especially the permitting their clergy to tyrannize over the consciences of men, like the prelates that went before them. This latter, indeed, seems to have given Milton the greatest disgust, who was a mortal foe to the dominion of priests, and a zealous assertor of the rights of conscience. He could not bear that the same kind of men should complain of and exercise oppression ; that those, in whose cause he had drawn his pen, should defeat all his hopes, and manifest, that it was not liberty but power they had been contending for ;

Because you have thrown off your prelate lord,
And with stiff vows renounc'd his liturgy,
To seize the widow'd whore Plurality,
From them, whose sin ye envied, not abhor'd ;
Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword,
To force our consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic hierarchy.—

Montesquieu seems to account well for a behaviour which appears at first sight so unnatural. ‘ It is a principle, says he, that every religion

religion which is persecuted becomes itself persecuting ; for as soon as by some accidental turn it arises from persecution, it attacks the religion which persecuted it ; not as a religion, but as a tyranny.'

The parliament, however, rectified their conduct, even on this head, to the sore displeasure of the lordly presbyters, and kept them from misusing and oppressing their brethren : so that upon the whole, tho' they were not free from faults, yet were they, in the eyes of the knowing and unprejudiced, the ablest and noblest set of people this nation ever produced. Mr. Trenchard celebrates their actions in the following manner. ' The parliament governed for five years, who made their names famous through the whole earth, conquered their enemies in England, Scotland and Ireland ; reduced the kingdom of Portugal to their own terms ; recovered our reputation at sea ; overcame the Dutch in several famous battles ; secured our trade, and managed the public expences with so much frugality, that no estates were gained by private men upon the public miseries ; and at last were passing an act for their own dissolution, and settling the nation in a free and impartial commonwealth ; of which the army being afraid, thought it necessary to dissolve them.'

From thence the nation passed into a military government, under the influence and direction of Cromwell, by the name and stile of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the dominions and territories thereunto belonging. The exercise of his power was as arbitrary as that of any king. He set up and dissolved parliaments at discretion; and nothing seemed wanting to him to satiate the lust of his ambition but the title of king; a vain pretence in him to give weight to his house of peers, and other essential points of government. His parliament was ready to come into his measures; but his best friends and the principal officers of the army vigorously opposed them, having petitioned the parliament: 'That they had hazarded their lives against monarchy, and were still ready so to do in defence of the liberties of the nation; that having observed in some men great endeavours to bring the nation again under their old servitude, by pressing their general to take upon him the title and government of a king, in order to destroy him, and weaken the hands of those who were faithful to the public, they therefore humbly desired that they would discountenance all such persons and endeavours, and to continue steadfast to the old cause,

cause; for the preservation of which, they, for their parts, were most ready to lay down their lives.'—This petition was subscribed by two colonels, seven lieutenant-colonels, eight majors, and fifteen captains, who with such officers of the house as were of the same opinion, made up the majority of those relating to that part of the army which was then quartered about the town. It is difficult to determine, whether the house or Cromwell was more surprized at this unexpected address; but certainly both were infinitely disturbed at it. His opponents we must suppose to be men of principle, as chusing rather to disoblige him, and forfeit their employments, than to build again what they had destroyed. Certain it is, the assuming of the diadem was eligible in Cromwell's own eye, and in the eye of Thurloe, and therefore it may well be thought they saw many advantages in it; and it appears at first sight that it would have restored the constitution, as founded on an original contract. The parliament consisting of two houses, suited well with the title of king, which was at first intended for the protector; and probably, if that had been assumed, many of the ancient nobility and gentry would have been pleased to have had seats in the upper-house. But tho' Cromwell was frustrated in his

hopes of the crown, the project of a house of lords was continued. Some were fit, but not willing to serve ; others willing and desirous, but very unfit. All the old nobility, lord Eure excepted, refused to sit in this new assembly, on account perhaps of the mean original of some of the company, or of the authority by which they were convened. However, they did nothing of any importance. The secluded members being admitted into the house of commons, turned all things against the court; refused any intercourse with the new house of lords; and behaved so ill in the eye of the protector, that, in great heat, he dissolved them. This was the last parliament that sat during Cromwell's life, ' he being compelled to wrestle with the difficulties of his place, says Mr. Maidstone, so well as he could, without parliamentary assistance, and in it met with so great a burden, as (I doubt not to say it, drank up his spirits, of which his natural constitution yielded a vast stock) and brought him to his grave.' This seems to confirm what bishop Burnet says, ' that it was generally believed that his life and all his arts were exhausted at once, and that if he had lived much longer, he could not have held things together.' Mr. Cowley observes, ' that he seemed evidently to

to be near the end of his deceitful glories, his own army growing at last as weary of him, as the rest of the people ; and he died with grief and discontent, because he could not attain to the honest name of a king, and the old formality of a crown, though he had before exceeded the power by a wicked usurpation.'—That care, anxiety, disappointment, and vexation prey on the spirits, and waste the constitution, is known to all ; that these were the lot of Cromwell, as they are of most of those who are placed on the pinnacle of glory, and attentive to the calls of their ambition, or their fame, may very easily be conceived ; that the government of Cromwell was greatly embarrassed by the madness of parties, the estrangement of friends, and the want of money to pay the armies which it was necessary to keep on foot : I say that this was so, is too evident to be denied. But had the life of the protector been prolonged, it is not impossible he might have got the better of his difficulties, and maintained his post in spite of all opposition. For we are to remember it was Cromwell who had dared to seize the government ; to raise money by his own authority ; to create and dissolve parliaments ; to combat with kings, and to scatter terror through nations. By what means he

would have done this, whether by securing Fleetwood and Desbrowe, to whom he owed his disappointment in assuming the crown, and calling another parliament, must be left to conjecture. The latter he certainly had thoughts of before the sickness that put a period to his life.

The minister chiefly employed and consulted by Cromwell, was John Thurloe, Esq; who is deservedly transmitted to posterity in a very favourable light. He was a man of a very amiable character in private life ; and, in the height of his power, exercised all possible moderation towards persons of every party. His manner of writing is remarkable above most of his cotemporaries for its conciseness, perspicuity, and strength. But the most authentic testimony of his abilities is that vast collection of his state-papers, now in the hands of the public ; which place the history of Europe in general, as well as that of Great Britain and its dominions, during that remarkable period, in the clearest light ; and shew at the same time his astonishing industry and application in the management of so great a variety of important affairs, which passed intirely through his hands, with a secrecy and success not to be paralleled under any other government.

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We now come to the memorable epoch of the restoration of king Charles II. which happened in 1660. ‘ It is most true, and must never be denied, says lord Clarendon, that the people were admirably disposed and prepared to pay all the subjection, duty, and obedience, that a just and prudent king could expect from them, and had a very sharp aversion and detestation of all those who had formerly misled and corrupted them ; so that except the General, who seemed to be possessed intirely of the affection of the army, and whose fidelity was now above any misapprehension, there appeared no man whose power and interest could in any degree shake and endanger the peace and security the king was in ; the congratulations for his return being so universal, from all the counties of England, as well as from the parliament and city ; from all those wh^t had most signally diserved and disclaimed him, as well as from those of his own party and those who were descended from them : insomuch as the king was wont merrily to say, “ that it could be nobody’s fault but his own that he had stayed so long abroad, when all mankind wished him so heartily at home.” It cannot therefore but be concluded by the spectators of this wonderful change and acclamation of all degrees

of men, that there must be some wonderful miscarriage in the state, or some unheard of defect of understanding in those who were trusted by the king in the administration of his affairs ; that there could in so short a time be a new revolution in the general affections of the people, that they grew even weary of that happiness they were possessed of and had so much valued, and fell into the same discontents and murmurings which had naturally accompanied them in the worst times.'

The fatal causes of these miserable effects seem to be ; first, an almost unbounded appetite in the king after all sorts of pleasures, which insensibly introducing an habitual depravation of the mind, made him remiss, indolent, careless, and neglectful of the duties incumbent on his station : Secondly, as a consequence of this disposition, the butt he was made of, or the prey he became to, the artifice, designs, and avarice of Favourites and Sycophants of all denominations : Thirdly, as another consequence also of this disposition, his giving into measures to the prejudice of his subjects and the dishonour of his crown, whereby wicked ministers, as a support to luxurious life and the dignity of royalty, flattered his inbred notions of arbitrary sway. Not but Charles II. had his lucid intervals,

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and was in the main a prince of capacity ; but all his good qualities, and some very valuable, were so clouded by his foibles, that little through so obscure a medium could be discerned, to render his character amiable to posterity, or his example an object of imitation to future princes.

He was first rather over-awed than baffled by the influence of general Monk, soon after created duke of Albemarle ; and the General's lady, by her ascendant over her husband, lies under some foul imputations of avarice by the sale of places. The companions of his exile and distress were those that seemed naturally better intituled to his favour ; and therefore, as lord Clarendon expresses it, ‘ had the keener appetites, and the stronger presumption to push their fortunes in the infancy of their master's restoration, that other men might not be preferred before them, who had not “ borne the heat of the day,” as they had done.’ Whence, lord Clarendon himself may be said to stand first in the list for the signal services rendered by him, both to father and son. But the king's want of a thorough sense of the benefits he had received, so wrought upon him, that he could, on any intervening accident, part with and forget his best friends. Insensibility was a strong ingredient in his

character, and seemed indeed so closely interwoven with his nature, that he was always prompt to obey its impulse, except in the case of his bosom friends, his mistresses. The faithful servant, and prudent and wise counsellor was no longer of any consideration in lord Clarendon, when his duty compelled him to shew some opposition to his master's inclinations. The gravity and austerity of his morals laid a restraint on him ; and, at last, not able to bear the intrusion of such a monitor, he easily consented to his impeachment and banishment. This verifies the maxim of Philip de Comines, who says, ' that it ruins a man frequently to have done too good service ;' signifying that princes are more willing to have others beholding to them, than be beholding themselves to others ; and some when they see their obligation to any man so great, that they think they cannot conveniently reward him to his merit and satisfaction, look upon him as an eye-sore, and seek one way or other to be rid of him. Lord Clarendon, to an impartial person, seems to have exculpated himself from whatever has been laid to his charge, and nothing, as he says himself in his Continuation, can be found in his conduct that can make his children ashamed of his memory.

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The Cabal, that afterwards took place, was built upon the ruin of lord Clarendon. About this time, the parliament, which had carried the Royal Prerogative to a high pitch, might justly suppose, that the king had reason to be pleased with them, and would endeavour to preserve a happy union with a parliament so devoted to him. But the king, instead of being content with the power ascribed him by the parliament, thought it unworthy to found the extent of his authority upon acts of parliament only. Besides, it was a pain to him to be forced to demand money, and to use for that purpose pretences notoriously false, tho' the parliament seemed to be satisfied with them. It would have been more agreeable to him to say, ‘It is my will and pleasure,’ than to be obliged to use humble intreaties to the commons. This his Favourites were continually representing to him; and if father Orleans is to be credited, his ministers pretended great indignation to see a republican spirit creeping into the parliament, and engaging them in so many proceedings against the royal authority. Among other things the Triple Alliance, into which the republicans had forced the king contrary to his inclination, appeared to the ministers an audacious usurpation upon the Royal Prerogative, the conse-

consequences of which were to be prevented. Full of these resentments, they persuaded the king to render himself absolute, to confine the parliament within bounds, and not to suffer a mixture of a republic with a monarchy, introduced by violence and encroachments, lest this mixture should in time produce a monstrous anarchy, and expose England to a horrible confusion, like that from which she was so lately delivered. This historian's word may be so far taken, as we are assured by himself, that he was informed by James II. of the particulars of his own and his brother's reign.

This resolution being taken, the king, who was acute enough, easily saw, that the execution of it required an artful and cautious conduct, and such secret and imperceptible measures, as would not too plainly discover his intentions: for he could not suppose, that, because he desired to be absolute, the people of England would immediately give up their liberties and privileges. It was therefore necessary to lead them to it insensibly and by degrees; and to that end he wanted a secret council, composed of few persons in whom he might intirely confide, and whose interest it was to accomplish this design. The ordinary council was not proper
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to conduct this affair ; for, besides that some counsellors had a right to their places, it was very difficult to engage so many persons of the first rank in such a plot. The king therefore established a cabinet council of five persons only, namely, Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley, Lauderdale ; and it was called the Cabal, as the initial letters of these five names compose that word.

Sir Thomas Clifford †, according to father Orleans, only wanted a stage, where sound reason and virtue were more frequent, than at this time in England, to appear superior to the others. He was a declared and known abettor of the church of Rome, so that he took no pains to disguise his religion. It was he who after the triple alliance was concluded, said, ‘ Notwithstanding all this noise, we must yet have another war with Holland.’ The event justified his prediction, and it is probable the scheme was then formed, and he in the secret.

Henry Bennet, earl of Arlington, secretary of state, was, according to bishop Burnet, a proud man ; and his parts were solid, but not quick. He had the art of observing the king’s temper, and managing it beyond all the men of that time. He was believed a pa-

† Afterwards Lord High Treasurer.

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pist ; he had once professed it, and at his death again reconciled himself to the church of Rome. Yet in the whole course of his ministry he seemed to have made it a maxim, that the king ought to shew no favour to popery, since all his affairs would be ruined, if ever he turned that way ; which made the papists become his mortal enemies, and accuse him as an apostate, and the betrayer of their interests.

George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, the king's Favourite, had a very lively wit : he might have made a great minister of state, had not his strong passion for pleasures and all sorts of debauches, diverted him from business. He gloried in having no religion, and was reckoned an Atheist.

Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper was one of the greatest geniuses England had produced for many years. This is the testimony equally given of him by friends and enemies. Father Orleans gives the following character of him : ‘ He was the most capable of the five to manage any important undertaking, and was the soul of this. He had a vast genius ; was penetrating, bold, and equally steady both on the right and the wrong side ; a constant friend, but an implacable enemy, and the more dangerous, as being void of all religion

and conscience ; whence it was the easier for him to plot, because he was not deterred by the number or enormity of any crimes, when he judged them necessary to preserve himself, or destroy those who had incurred his hatred. It is necessary to observe here, that this character of the earl of Shaftsbury is not founded upon what he had done before his admission into the cabinet council, but upon what he did afterwards. Mr. Locke speaks otherwise of him, but says nothing to his advantage in respect to religion.

The duke of Lauderdale was the most proper of the five to serve the king in this affair. He was now as much for exalting the prerogative, as he was formerly for depressing it ; and having undertaken to make his majesty's power in Scotland absolute and arbitrary, he stretched the power of the crown to all kinds of excesses, and assumed to himself a sort of lawless administration, the exercise of which was supposed to be granted him upon the large promises he had made. In the prosecution of this design, being more apprehensive of other mens officious interfering, than distrustful of his own abilities, he took care to make himself the king's sole informer, as well as his sole secretary ; and by this means, not only the affairs of Scotland were deter-

determined in the court of England, without any notice taken of the king's council in Scotland, but strict observation was also made of all Scotsmen, who came to the English court; and to attempt an address or access to his majesty, otherwise than by his lordship's mediation, was to hazard his perpetual resentment. By these ways he gradually made himself almost the only significant person of the whole Scots nation; and in Scotland itself procured to himself so sovereign an authority, as to name the privy-counsellors, to place and remove the lords of the session and exchequer, to grant gifts and pensions, to levy and disband forces, to appoint general officers, and to transact all matters of importance. He was, according to lord Clarendon, a man of parts and industry, but loved pleasures too much; proud, ambitious, insolent, imperious, flattering, and dissembling; and had courage enough not to fail where it was absolutely necessary, and no impediment of honour to restrain him from doing any thing that might gratify any of his passions; nor was his fiery spirit capable of any moderation. Dr. Kennet likewise observes, that he had neither morals nor any reputation or integrity; but was of an impetuous spirit, a great promoter of arbitrary power, and indeed the under-

underminer of episcopacy in Scotland, by laying it on a new foundation, the pleasure of the king. Bishop Burnet thus characterizes him. ‘ He made a very ill appearance, and his whole manner was rough and boisterous, and very unfit for a court. He was learned not only in Latin, in which he was a master, but in Greek and Hebrew. He had read a great deal in divinity, and almost all the historians, ancient and modern ; so that he had great materials. He had with these an extraordinary memory ; and a copious but unpolished expression. He had a violence of passion, that carried him often to fits like madness, in which he had no temper. If he took a thing wrong, it was a vain thing to study to convince him ; that would rather provoke him to swear he would never be of another mind : he was to be let alone ; and perhaps he would have forgot what he had said, and come about of his own accord. He was a very cold friend, but a very violent enemy. He seemed at first to despise wealth ; but he delivered himself up afterwards to luxury and sensuality ; and by that means run into a vast expence, and stuck at nothing that was necessary to support it. He was in his principles much against popery and arbitrary government ; and yet by a fatal train of paf-
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sions and interests, he made way for the former, and had almost established the latter. And whereas some by a smooth deportment made the first beginnings of tyranny less discernible and unacceptable ; he by the fury of his behaviour heightened the severity of his ministry, which was more like the cruelty of an inquisition, than the legality of justice. With all this, he was a presbyterian, and retained his aversion to king Charles I. and his party to his death. The duke of Buckingham used to call him a man of a blundering understanding.'

If to these five members of the Cabal we join the king and the duke of York, it will be found, that all the seven were for an absolute and arbitrary government. The first thing resolved on, was to break the Triple Alliance : the second to have a war with Holland, in order to furnish the king with a pretence to keep on foot both land and sea-forces ; and the true reason of engaging in this war, was as much to put it out of the power of the States to assist the English, as to have a pretence for raising forces : the third, to enter into a strict alliance with France : the fourth, as a consequence of the rest, was to render the king absolute, or, in their language, a great prince, under which article

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Rapin comprizes the establishment of popery, tho' the article of religion is omitted by the king's adherents.

The first fruits of the Cabal's projects, was shutting up the exchequer, by which the king, besides the supplies granted him in parliament, was sure of fifteen hundred thousand pounds. Sir Thomas Clifford, and the earl of Shaftsbury, both claiming the merit of this enterprize, were raised, the first, to the important post of lord high treasurer; the second, shortly after, to that of lord chancellor. This was followed by a declaration from the king for liberty of conscience; but the commons vigorously opposing it, the king found himself extremely embarrassed, and the Cabal were struck with astonishment at his irresolution, all their hopes being founded on his steadiness. They were to engage in a contest, in which they flattered themselves to render the king victorious; but they saw the king retreating when he should have prepared for battle; and consequently the hopes of victory were intirely vanished. But this was not all they had to fear; they were in danger of being abandoned by the king, after this first step, to the resentment of the two houses; for how could they hope for the protection of the king, who

had just given such manifest marks of his own fear.

The earl of Arlington had in some measure deserted the Cabal, by advising the king to revoke his declaration for liberty of conscience. The earl of Shaftesbury soon followed him, but in a manner more surprising, more public, and with more remarkable circumstances. This was the second time he had experienced the king's inconstancy and want of resolution. The affair of the declaration was common to him with the rest of the Cabal ; but the writs, issued out of chancery for the election of members to fill the vacancies in parliament were peculiar to him. He had undertaken to issue these writs as chancellor, on pretence of some precedents which were never known, upon the king's positive promise to stand by him ; and yet he was deserted by the king, at the first instance of the commons, or rather before their complaints. Having therefore reason to fear a vigorous prosecution for this fact, he believed, he had no other way to divert the impending storm, than by quitting the king's party, and throwing himself into the contrary : he executed this resolution, says father Orleans, the day after the king resolved to revoke his declaration for liberty of conscience, appearing in the house of lords, at the head of

of the most violent party, against the catholic religion, the Dutch war, and the union with France. He did more, if father Orleans is to be credited; for, in a full house, he discovered the reasons which had induced the king to grant liberty of conscience, join with France, and declare war against the States.

The members of the Cabal found means to escape the inquiries and prosecution of the parliament. The duke of Buckingham endeavoured to clear himself by casting all the odium upon the earl of Arlington, who being admitted to make his defence, answered some parts of the duke's speech, but was so far from giving satisfaction with regard to his own conduct, that the house of commons immediately drew up articles of impeachment against him, wherein he was charged to have been a constant and vehement promoter of popery and popish councils; to have been guilty of many undue practices in order to promote his own greatness; to have embezzled and wasted the treasure of the nation; and to have falsely and traiterously betrayed the important trust reposed in him, as a counsellor and principal secretary of state. Upon this he appeared before the house of commons, and spoke much more than was expected; excusing himself, tho' without blaming the

king. This had so good an effect, that tho' he, as secretary of state, was more exposed than any other, by the many warrants and orders which he had signed ; yet he was acquitted by a small majority. But the care which he took to preserve himself, and his success in it, lost him his high favour with the king, as the duke of York was out of measure offended with him. The earl of Danby succeeded lord Clifford in the office of lord high treasurer ; and as for the duke of Lauderdale, his honours did not protect him from the indignation of the house of commons, by whom he was voted a grievance, and not fit to be trusted or employed in any office or place of trust. And tho' his majesty thought proper in 1674, to create him a peer of England, yet the commons the next year presented an address to the king to remove him from all his employments, and from his majesty's presence and counsels for ever ; which address was followed by another of the same kind in 1678, and by a third the year following.

The earl of Danby was now considered as the king's Prime Minister. He had a great genius and a solid judgment ; and, as he disapproved of the principals of the Cabal, he endeavoured to disengage the king from the methods he had been led into by their counsels.

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This drew upon him the enmity of the duke of York, and all the French faction; and these enemies were joined by another who had been his most intimate friend. This was Mr. Montague, ambassador in France, who, aspiring to the office of secretary of state, took it very ill, that the treasurer had engaged to bring in Sir William Temple. Mr. Montague was the treasurer's most dangerous enemy, because he had private letters in his hands from that minister, relating to the negociation with France concerning the king's pension. Articles of impeachment were hereupon drawn up against the treasurer, with the intention to oblige him, for his own safety, to plead the king's orders for what he had done. It is certain, he was not so much aimed at as the king himself, and that it was intended by sending him to the Tower, to shew the public, that the king and the duke of York were the real authors of all the evils of the kingdom. He afterwards escaped by pleading the king's pardon, and being dismissed, the treasury was put into commission.

However, the storm the earl of Shaftesbury had raised against the court, after deserting the Cabal, was not to be quelled; he caused the king and duke to undergo the greatest mortifications; and hence we may date all the

dark designs, and plots and counterplots which then prevailed; and for which many innocent persons on both sides suffered. Nor was there any relaxation of the turbulency and confusion of the times on account of these and the exclusion-bill, till the king rid himself of the parliament, and reigned absolute till his death without calling another.

James II. his brother, succeeded him in 1685. He assured his parliament, that he was determined to protect the church of England, and maintain the liberties and properties of his people; but the same measures were pursued as in the preceding reign, and in a short time brought about the Revolution.

James II. abstracting from his religious principles, has been considered even by his enemies, as a prince of consummate talents, and as one extremely well fitted for the government of a mercantile nation as this is, being very intelligent in its commercial interests, and in the necessary regulations for that purpose. But his grasping at arbitrary power, a fault common to him with his predecessors, yet a fault not to be allowed of by the British constitution; and his strenuous endeavours to subvert the established religion of the land, by the introduction of his own, compelled the nation into an opinion, that

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government could not any longer be safely trusted in his hands, without great restrictions imposed by the nature of the original contract between king and people, to which he did not seem inclined to submit.

Tho' the principles of nature and common sense fully authorize resistance to the civil magistrate in extreme cases, and, of course, justify the revolution to every candid and dispassionate man; yet there are many prejudices which hinder the proceedings in that affair from being seen in their true light. Whatever advantage the cause of liberty may receive from general reasonings on the origin and nature of civil government, the greater part of our countrymen will consider, and perhaps rightly, the enquiry into the constitution of their own government, as a question of fact; that must be tried by authorities and precedents only; and decided at last by the evidence of historical testimony, not by the conclusions of philosophy or political speculation.

There is little room to doubt but that the form of the English government has, at all times, been free, and that it is on principles of freedom it has been continually and uniformly conducted. Some perhaps may be inclined to think the contrary: for, besides

the name, and other ensigns of majesty, in common with those who wear the most despotic crowns, the whole execution of our laws, and the active part of government is in the hands of the prince ; and this pre-eminence gives him so respectable a figure in the eyes of his subjects, and presents him so constantly, and with such lustre of authority to their minds, that it is no wonder they are sometimes disposed to advance him from the rank of first magistrate of a free people, into that of supreme and sole arbiter of the laws. But unless these prejudices are corrected by the knowledge of our constitutional history, there is constant reason to apprehend, not only that the royal authority may stretch itself beyond due bounds ; but may grow at length into that enormous tyranny, from which this nation has been at other times so happily, and now about half a century past, so wonderfully redeemed by the abdication of James II.

It is very notorious from the common discourse of men on this occasion, that very many of us have but crude notions of the form of government, under which we live, and which has been transmitted to us from our forefathers. They allow, indeed, that something was to be done in the perilous circumstances into which we had fallen. But when

when they come to explain themselves, it is in a way that leaves us no right to do anything ; at least, not what it was found expedient for the nation to do at that juncture. For they contend, that the crown of England is absolute ; that the form of government is an intire and simple monarchy ; and that so it has continued to be in every period of it down to the Abdication : that the Conquest, at least, to ascend no higher, invested the first William in absolute dominion ; that from him it devolved of course upon his successors ; and that all the pretended rights of the people, the great charters of ancient and modern date, were mere usurpations on the prince, extorted from him by the necessity of his affairs, and revocable at his pleasure : nay, they insinuate that parliaments themselves were the creatures of his will ; that their privileges were all derived from the sovereign's grant ; and that they made no part in the original frame and texture of the English government.

In support of this extraordinary system, they refer us to the constant tenor of our history. They speak of the Conqueror, as proprietary of the whole kingdom ; which accordingly, they say, he parcelled out, as he saw fit, in grants to his Norman and English subjects :

subjects : that, through his partial consideration of the church, and an excessive liberality to his favoured servants, this distribution was so ill made as to give occasion to all the broils and contentions that followed : that the churchmen began their unnatural claim of independency on the crown ; in which attempt they were soon followed by the encroaching and too powerful barons : that in these struggles many flowers of the crown were rudely torn from it, till a sort of truce was made, and the rebellious humour somewhat composed by the extorted articles of Running-Mede : that, these confusions, however, were afterwards renewed, and even increased by the contests of the two houses of York and Lancaster : but that upon the union of the roses in the person of Henry VII. these commotions were finally appeased, and the crown restored to its ancient dignity and lustre : that, indeed, the usage of parliaments, with some other forms of popular administration, which had been permitted in the former irregular reigns, was continued, but of the mere grace of the prince, and without any consequence to his prerogative : that, succeeding kings, and even Henry himself, considered themselves as possessed of an imperial crown ; and that, tho' they might sometimes

times condescend to take the advice, they were absolutely above the controul of the people : in short, that the law itself was but the will of the prince declared in parliament ; or rather solemnly received and attested there, for the better information and more intire obedience of the subject.

This they deliver as a just and fair account of the English government ; the genius of which, they say, is absolute and monarchical in the highest degree. They ask, what restraint our Henry VIII. and our admired Elizabeth would ever suffer to be put on their prerogative, and how the fancy came of dating the high pretensions of the crown from the accession of the Stuart family. They affirm, that James I. and his son, aimed only to continue the government on the footing on which they had received it ; that their notions of it were authorized by constant fact ; by the evidence of our histories ; by the language of parliaments ; by the concurrent sense of every order of men amongst us ; and, that what followed in the middle of the last century was the mere effect of popular, as many former disorders had been of patrician violence. In a word, they conclude with saying, that the old government revived again at the restoration, just as, in like circumstances, it had

had done before, at the union of the two houses : that, in truth, the desertion of James II. had given a colour to the subsequent innovations ; but that, till the new settlement was made, the English constitution, as implying something different from pure monarchy, was an unintelligible notion, or rather a mere whim that had not the least foundation in truth or history.

This is a summary of the doctrines, which are still but too current amongst us. But there is reason to apprehend much mischief from the prevalence and propagation of such a system ; a system, which, as being, in the language of the patrons of it, founded upon fact, is the more likely to impose upon the people ; and, as referring to the practice of ancient times, is not for every man's confutation. But let us examine in regard to this prerogative-system, and its contrary, whether there is any ground in history to conclude that the prince has a constitutional claim to absolute uncontrollable dominion ; or, whether the liberty of the subject be not essential to every different form, under which the English government has appeared.

The principles of the Saxon policy, and in some respects the form of it, have been constantly kept up in every succeeding period of the

the English monarchy. The spirit of liberty was predominant in those times, and for proof of it one single remarkable circumstance may be sufficient. Our Saxon ancestors conceived so little of government, by the will of the magistrate, without fixed laws, that Laga, or Leaga, which in their language first and properly signified the same as law with us, was transferred very naturally (for language always conforms itself to the genius, temper, and manners of a nation) to signify a country, district or province ; these good people having no notion of any inhabited country not governed by laws. Thus Dæna-Laga ; Mercena-Laga ; and Westsexena-Laga, were not only used in their laws and history to signify the laws of the Danes, Mercians and West-Saxons, but the countries likewise : of this usage many instances might be produced. It then plainly appears, how fully the spirit of liberty possessed the very language of our Saxon fore-fathers. And it might well do so ; for it was of the essence of the German constitutions ; a just notion of which (so uniform was the genius of the brave people that planned them) may be gathered from what the Roman historians, and, above all, from what Tacitus has recorded of them.

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The defenders of regal power, conscious to themselves of the testimony which the Saxon times are ready to bear against them, are wise enough to lay the foundation of their system in the Conquest. They look no higher than that event for the origin of the constitution, and think they have a notable advantage in deducing their notion of the English government from the form it took in the hands of the Norman invader. But is it not pleasant to hear these men calumniate the improvements that have been made from time to time in the plan of our civil constitution with the name of usurpations, when they are not ashamed to erect the constitution itself on what they must esteem, at least, a great and manifest usurpation ?

Allowing them to dignify the Norman settlement with the title of Constitution ; what follows ? That despotism was of the essence of that constitution : so they tell us indeed ; but without one word of proof for the assertion. Do they think the name of Conquest, or even the Thing, implies an absolute unlimited dominion ? Have they forgot that William's claim to the crown was not conquest (tho' it enabled him to support his claim) but testamentary succession ? A title very much in the taste of that time, and extremely revered

renced by our Saxon ancestors. That he even renounced his conquest by his coronation-oath ; that the legislative power continued the same in his hands, as in those of his predecessors ; and that, in one word, he confirmed the Saxon laws, at least before he had been many years in possession of his new dignity.

Is there any thing in all this that favours the notion of his erecting himself into an absolute lord of the conquered country ? Is it not certain, even from his own Magna Charta, as we may call it, that he bound himself to govern according to law ; that he could neither touch the honours nor estates of his subjects but by legal trial ; and that even the many forfeitures in his reign are an evidence of his proceeding in that method ?

Still we are told of his parcelling out the whole land, upon his own terms, to his followers, and of his famous institution of feudal tenures. But what if the former of these assertions be foreign to the purpose at least, if not false ; and the latter, subversive of the very system it is brought to establish. The fact has been much disputed of his parcelling out most, or all, of the lands of England to his followers. But supposing, that the property of all the soil in the kingdom had changed hands ; what is that to us, who claim

claim under our Norman, as well as Saxon ancestors? The Saxons might be injured, oppressed, enslaved; and yet the Constitution, transmitted to us through the Normans, be perfectly free. But he instituted, they say, the feudal law. True. But the feudal law, and absolute dominion, are two things; and, what is more, perfectly incompatible.

Throughout the Norman and Plantagenet lines, there was one perpetual contest between the prince and his feudataries for law and liberty; an evident proof of the light in which our forefathers regarded the Norman constitution. In the competition of the two roses, and perhaps before, they lost sight indeed of this prize. But no sooner was the public tranquillity restored, and the contending claims united in Henry VII. than the old spirit revived: a legal constitution became the constant object of the people, and tho' not always avowed, was, in effect, as constantly submitted to by the sovereign. It may be true, perhaps, that the ability of Henry VII. the impetuous carriage of Henry VIII. and the generous intrigues of queen Elizabeth; but above all, the condition of the times and a sense of former miseries, kept down the spirit of liberty for some reigns, or diminished, at least the force and vigour of its operations.

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But a passive subjection was never acknowledged, certainly never demanded as matter of right, 'till queen Elizabeth now and then, and king James, by talking continually in this strain, awakened the national jealousy ; which proved so uneasy to himself, and in the end, so fatal to his family. Whence, it may evidently appear, that, unless the system of liberty is connected with that of prerogative in our notion of the English government, the tenor of our history is perfectly unintelligible, and that no consistent account can be given of it, but on the supposition of a legal limited constitution.

The fault, if there was one, lay in the original plan of the constitution itself, as is clearly seen by considering the genius, views, and consequences of the feudal policy. It must, however, be affirmed that this policy was founded in the principles of freedom, and was, in truth, excellently adapted to an active, fierce and military people ; such as were all those to whom these western parts of Europe have been indebted for their civil constitutions. But between the burdensome services imposed on the subject by this tenure, or which it gave at least the pretence of exacting from him, and the too great restraint which an unequal and disproportioned allot-

ment of feuds, to the greater barons, laid on the sovereign ; but, above all, by narrowing the plan of liberty too much, and, while it seemed to provide for the dependency of the prince on one part of his subjects, by leaving both him and them in a condition to exercise an arbitrary dominion over all others ; hence it came to pass that the feudal policy naturally produced struggles and convulsions, till it was seen in the end to be altogether unsuited to the circumstances of a rich, civilized, and commercial people. The event was, that the inconveniences, perceived in this form of government, gradually made way for the introduction of a better ; which was not, however, so properly a new form, as the old one amended and set right, cleared of its mischiefs and inconsistencies, but conducted on the same principles as the former, and pursuing the same end, tho' by different methods.

It is not to be denied, perhaps, that in the heat of former contests, the barons sometimes carried their pretensions too far, and laboured in their turn to usurp on the crown, in revenge for the oppressions they had felt from it. However, their first contentions were only for a mitigation of the feudal system. It was not the character of the Norman

princes

princes to come easily into any project that was likely, in the least degree, to intrench on their powers. Yet the grievances complained of, were in part removed, in part moderated by Henry I. and many other successive charters. Tho' the last blow was not given to these feudal servitudes, till after the Restoration, when such of them as remained and were found prejudicial to the liberty of the subject, were finally abolished.

It will not be amiss to remember that in the old feudal policy, the king's barons, that is, such as held *in capite* of the crown by knight's service, were the king's, or rather the kingdom's, great council. No laws could be enacted without their consent. It appears, that towards the end of the Conqueror's reign, the number of these tenants in chief was about 700; who, as the whole property of the kingdom was, in effect, in their power, may be thought a no unfit representative of the nation. It was so, perhaps, in those rude and warlike times, when the strength of the nation lay entirely in the soldiery; that is, in those who held by knight-service, either immediately of the crown, or of the mesne-lords. For the remainder of the people, whom they call tenants in socage, were of small account; being considered only

in the light of servants, and contributing no otherwise to the national support than by their cultivation of the soil, which left their masters at leisure to attend with less distraction on their military services. However, a policy, that excluded such numbers from the rank and privileges of citizens, was so far a defective one. And this defect would become more sensible every day, in proportion to the growth of arts, the augmentation of commerce, and the security the nation found itself in from foreign dangers. Hence arose an important change in the legislature of the kingdom, which was much enlarged beyond its former limits. But this was done gradually; and was more properly an extension, than violation of the ancient system.

The number of tenants in chief, or the king's freeholders, was much increased by various causes, but chiefly by the alienation which the greater barons were permitted to make of their fees: the consequence was, that the lesser military tenants *in capite* multiplied exceedingly; and, as many of them were poor and unequal to a personal attendance in the court of their lord, or the common council of the kingdom (where of right and duty they were to pay their attendance) they were willing, and it was found convenient

nient to give them leave, to appear in the way of representation. And this was the origin of what we now call the knights of the shires ; who, in those times, were appointed to represent, not all the freeholders of counties, but the lesser tenants of the crown only : for these, not attending in person, would otherwise have had no place in the king's council.

The rise of citizens and burgesses, that is, representatives of the cities and trading towns, must be accounted for somewhat differently. When the military genius of the nation declined, and instead of a people of soldiers, the commercial spirit prevailed, and filled out towns with rich traders and merchants, it was no longer reasonable, nor was it the interest of the crown, that these communities and bodies of men should be so little regarded. On the contrary, a large share of the public burdens being laid upon them, and the frequent necessities of the crown, especially in foreign wars, or in the king's contentions with his barons, requiring him to have recourse to their purses, it was naturally brought about that those, as well as the tenants *in capite*, should be admitted to have a share in the public counsels. The great towns and cities, that before were royal demesnes, part of the

king's private patrimony, and talliable by him at pleasure, were therefore allowed to appear in his council by their deputies, to treat with him of the proportion of taxes to be raised on them, and in a word, to be considered in the same light as the other members of that great assembly. When this great alteration was first made is not so necessary here to enquire into ; we find it subsisting at least under Edward III. and from that time there is no dispute but that the legislature, which was originally composed of the sovereign and his feudal tenants, included also the representatives of the counties, and of the royal towns and cities. To speak in our modern style, the House of Commons was now formed ; and, by this addition, the glorious edifice of English liberty compleated.

Therefore the constitution of England, as laid in the feudal tenures, was essentially free, and the very changes it has undergone, were the natural and almost unavoidable effects of those tenures ; so that what the adversaries of liberty object, as usurpations on the regal prerogative, are now seen to be either the proper result of the feudal establishment, or the most just and necessary amendments of it. Hence, the notion of an absolute, despotic government amongst us, is intirely discredited;

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and we may, perhaps, apply to the English government what naturalists observe of the human body ; that, when it arrives at its full growth, it does not perhaps retain a single particle of the matter it originally set out with, yet the alteration has been made so gradually and imperceptibly, that the system is accounted the same under all changes. We seem to have shaken off the constituent parts of the feudal constitution ; but, liberty having been always the informing principle, time and experience have rather compleated the old system than created a new one ; and we account the present and Norman establishment all one, by the same rule as we say that Hercules, when he became the deliverer of oppressed nations, was still the same with him who had strangled serpents in his cradle.

There is but one objection of any weight that can be opposed to this conclusion. It is, " That, notwithstanding the clear evidence produced, both for the free nature of the English constitution, and the general sense of the English nation concerning it, yet, in fact, the government was very despotic under the Tudor, and still more perhaps under the first princes of the Stuart line. How could this happen on the plan which supposes the popular interest to have been kept up in constant vi-

gour, or rather to have been always gaining, insensibly indeed but necessarily, on the power of the crown ? Will not the partizans of king James II. and his family, have reason to alledge in their behalf, that their notions of the prerogative were but such as they succeeded to with the crown ; and, whatever may be pretended from researches into remoter times, that they endeavoured only to maintain the monarchy on the footing on which it had stood for many successions, and on which it then stood when the administration fell into their hands ?

To clear up this important matter, it will be very necessary to observe, that whether we consider the characters of the persons, or the circumstances of the times, every thing concurred to exalt the princes of the house of Tudor to a height of power and prerogative, which had hitherto been unknown in England, and became, in the end, so dangerous to the constitution itself.

A long and bloody war, that had well nigh exhausted the strength and vitals of this country, was, at length, composed by the fortunate successes of Bosworth-field. All men were desirous to breathe a little from the rage of civil wars ; and the enormous tyranny of the prince, whose death had made way for

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the exaltation of the earl of Richmond, was a sort of foil to the new government, and made the rigours of it appear but moderate when set against the cruelties of the preceding reign.

Henry VII. was wise and provident ; jealous of his authority as well as title ; and fruitful in expedients to secure both. There was little danger of any successful opposition to the crown, if the nation had been ever so ill inclined towards it. The great lords, or barons, were in former days, both by the feudal constitution, and by the vast property they had in their hands, the proper and only check on the sovereign. These had been either cut off, or so far weakened at least by the preceding civil wars, that the danger seemed intirely over from that quarter. The politic king was aware of this advantage, and improved it to admiration. One may even affirm, that this was the sole object of his government. For the greater security and majesty of his person, he began with the institution of his life-guard ; and having thus set out with enlarging his own train, his next care was to diminish that of his nobles. Hence, the laws against Retainers, which he constantly put in execution with a jealous severity. It was also with a view to this depression

fion of the nobility, that the court of Star Chamber was considered so much, and confirmed by act of parliament in his reign. What was principally aimed at by it, as his historian frankly owns, was force, and the two chief supports of force, combination of multitudes, and maintenance or headship of great persons. To put them still lower in the public estimation, he affected to fill the great offices with churchmen only : and it was, perhaps, as much to awe the nation by the terror of his prerogative as to fill his coffers, that he executed the penal laws with so merciless a rigour on the very greatest of his subjects. Still further, to prevent the possibility of a return, in any future period of the patrician power, this politic prince provided with great care for the encouragement of trade, and the distribution of property ; both which ends were effected at once by that famous act, which was made to secure and facilitate the alienation of estates by fine and proclamation. All these measures, we see, were evidently taken by the king to diminish the credit and suppress the influence of his nobles ; and of consequence, as he thought, to exalt the power of the crown above controul, if not in his own, yet in succeeding ages. And his policy had this effect for some time ;
tho'

tho' in the end it proved to advance another and more formidable power, at that time little suspected or even thought of, the power of the people.

His son had little else left him to do, but to keep the nobles down in that weak and disabled state, to which his father had reduced them. There was, besides, another circumstance of great moment attending his government : he was the first heir of the white and red roses ; so that there was now an end of all dispute and disaffection in the people. With these advantages of situation, Henry VIII. brought with him to the throne a spirit of that firm and steady temper as was exactly fitted to break the edge of any rising opposition. Besides the confidence of youth, he was of a nature so elate and imperious, so resolved and fearless, that no resistance could succeed, hardly any thought of it could be entertained against him. The commons, who had hitherto been unused to treat with their kings but by the mediation of the great lords, being now pushed into the presence, were half discountenanced in the eye of majesty ; and durst scarcely look up to the throne, much less dispute the prerogatives with which so awful a prince was thought to be invested. And when the glaring abuse of his power, as in

in the exaltation of that great instrument of his tyranny, Wolsey, seemed afterwards to provoke the people to some more vigorous resolutions, a single event happened which not only preserved his greatness, but brought a further increase to it. This was the famous rupture with the court of Rome : nor was this all. The throne did not only stand by itself, as having no longer a dependence on the papal chair : it rose still higher, and was, in effect, erected upon it. For the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was not annihilated, but transferred ; and all the powers of the Roman pontiff now centered in the king's person. Henceforth then we are to regard him in a more awful point of view, as armed with both swords at once. In fine, every thing contributed in him to the advancement of the regal power.

Thus matters, in a good degree, continued till the accession of queen Elizabeth. It is true, the weak administration of a minor king, and a disputed title at his death, occasioned some disorders ; but the majesty of the crown itself was little impaired by these bustles ; and it even acquired fresh glory on the head of that renowned princess, who, with the united qualifications of her father and grandfather,

father, surpassed them both in the arts of a winning and gracious popularity.

From this brief history of the Regal Authority exercised by the house of Tudor, and the means by which it arrived at so unusual a greatness, it is no wonder that the Stuart family were somewhat dazzled by the height to which they were raised, and that more than half a century was required to correct, if ever it did correct, the high but false notions they had entertained of the imperial dignity. A power, which had domineered for so long a time, and that by the full allowance of parliament and people, was in their opinion, both in fact and right, absolute and uncontrollable. It is certain, the Stuart family did draw that conclusion; but a great deal too hastily, because the exercise of this extraordinary power was committed, or more properly indulged to them by the people. This is so strictly true, that from the first to the last of the Tudor line, imperious and despotic as they were of their own nature, no stretch of power was ventured upon by any of them, but under the countenance and protection of an act of parliament; and the parliaments, by taking care to make every addition to the crown their own proper act, left their kings no pretence to consider themselves

elyes as absolute and independent. There is a wide difference between the crown's usurping this strange power, and the parliament's bestowing it. The forms of liberty were still kept up through the intire reigns of the house of Tudor, and the constitution maintained, even amidst the advantages of all sorts which offered for the destruction of both. The parliament indeed was obsequious, was servile, was directed to favour their prince's interest or caprice by absurd and inconsistent compliances, as was frequently the case when Henry VIII's passions swayed him ; but they drew this benefit at least to themselves, that their power by that means would appear the greater and more unquestionable. The king in the mean time found himself at his ease ; perhaps believed himself absolute, and considered his application to parliaments as an act of mere grace and popular condescension. At least after so long experience of their submission, the elder James certainly thought himself at liberty to entertain this belief of them. But he was the first of our princes that durst avow this belief plainly and openly. He was stimulated, no doubt, to this usurpation of power in England by the memory of his former subjection, or servitude rather, to the imperious church of Scotland. But this

was not all. Succeeding to so fair a patrimony as that of a mighty kingdom, and bringing, besides, with him to the succession, an undisputed title and the additional splendor of another crown ; all these advantages meeting in his person at that point of time, he ventured to give way to his natural love of dominion, and told the people to their face that the pretended rights of their parliaments were but the free gifts and graces of their kings ; that every high point of government, that is, every point which he chose to call by that name, was wrapt up in the awful mystery of his prerogative ; and, in a word, that “ it † was sedition for them to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power.”

Such was the language, the public language to his parliaments, of James I. but these pretences, which might have been suffered, or could not have been opposed under the Tudor line, were unluckily out of season, and would not pass on a people who knew their own rights, had saved to themselves the exercise of them, and came now at length to feel and understand their importance. For, as before observed, the principal cause that had lifted the crown so high, was the depre-

† Speech to the Lords and Commons at Whitehall, An.
1609.

sion of the barons. But the commons were rising apace, and in a century had grown to that height, that on the accession of the house of Stuart, the point of time when the new king dreamed of nothing but absolute sovereignty, they were now in a condition to assert the public liberty, and, as the event shewed but too soon, to snatch the sceptre itself out of the king's hands.

The translation of the pope's supremacy to the king, was the circumstance of all others which most favoured the sudden growth of the imperial power in this nation, the prerogative having received numerous advantages from this newly acquired headship. It gave birth to that great and formidable court of the High-Commission ; and as all matters that regarded religion or conscience, were subjected to its sole cognizance and inspection, it was presently seen how wide an entrance it gave to the most tyrannical usurpations. Fortunately for the advancement of prerogative there was already erected another court of the like dangerous nature, of ancient date, and venerable estimation, under the name of the court of Star-Chamber ; which brought every thing under the direction of the crown that could not so properly be determined in the High-Commission. These were the two

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arts of absolute dominion ; which, at different times, and under different pretences, were stretched forth to the oppression of every man that presumed to oppose himself to the royal will or pleasure. The Star-Chamber had been kept, in former times, within some tolerable bounds ; but the high and arbitrary proceedings of the other court, which were constantly exercised and as constantly connived at by the parliament, gave an easy pretence for advancing the Star-Chamber's jurisdiction so far, that in the end its tyranny was equally intolerable as that of the High-Commission, and both were totally abolished.

Thus it was that the king's authority in all cases, spiritual and temporal, was fully established, and in the highest sense of which the words are capable. Our kings themselves so understood it, and when afterwards their parliaments shewed a disposition to interfere in any thing relating either to church or state, they were presently reprimanded and sternly required not to meddle with what concerned their prerogative-royal, and their high points of government. Instances of this sort were very frequent in Elizabeth's reign, when the commons were getting up, and the spirit of liberty began to exert itself in that assembly.

This, one would think, was sufficient to satisfy the ambition of our kings ; but they went further, and still under the wing of their beloved supremacy. The parliament were not so tame, or the king's grace did not require it of them, to divest themselves intirely, tho' it was much checked and restrained by these courts, of their legislative capacity ; but the crown found a way to ease itself of this curb, if at any time it should prove troublesome to it. This was by means of the Dispensing Power, which in effect, vacated all laws at once, farther than it pleased the king to countenance and allow them. And for so enormous a stretch of power (which being rarely exercised was the less heeded) there was a ready pretence from the papal privileges and pre-eminentiess to which the crown had succeeded. For this most invidious of all the claims of prerogative had been indisputable in the church ; and it had been nibbled at by some of our kings in former times, from the contagious authority of the pope's example, even without the pretence which the supremacy in spirituals now gave for it. The exercise of this power in the popes themselves, was thought so monstrous, that Matthew Paris honestly complains of it in his time, as extin-

extinguishing all justice—* *extinguit omnem justitiam.*

It is in this dispensing spirit that James I. having delivered it for a maxim of state, “that the king is above law,” goes on to affirm, in one of his favourite works, “that general laws made publickly in parliament, may, upon known respects to the king, by his authority be mitigated and suspended upon causes only known to him †. But it is well known that the claiming and carrying too high this prerogative of the dispensing power by the princes of the house of Stuart, was what brought on the ruin of the last of them.

Another source of the regal dominion in later times, and still springing from out of the rock of supremacy (which followed and succoured the court-prerogative wherever it went, just as the rock of Moses, the Rabbins say, journeyed with the Jewish camp, and refreshed it in all its stations) was the opinion taken up and propagated by churchmen, from the earliest æra of the reformation, concerning the irresistible power of kings, and the Passive Obedience that is due to it.

* Hist. Ang. p. 694.

† *The true law of free Monarchies, in the King's works;*
p. 203.

It cannot be doubted that the churchmen especially, both by interest and principle, would be closely connected with the new head of the church. Their former subjection in spirituals to the papal authority would of itself create a prejudice in favour of it, as now residing in the king's person ; and, the disposal of bishopricks and other great preferments being now intirely in the crown, they would of courie be much addicted to his service.

What shall we also say of the pernicious system of the Divine Infeasible Right of kings which unhappily arose in like manner in the church of England, as another consequence of the king's supremacy. Henry the VIIIth's usurpation of the supremacy, as it was called at Rome, appeared so prodigious a crime to all good catholics, that no severities were great enough to inflict upon him for it ; and, when afterwards, in right of this assumed headship, the crown went so far as to reject the authority of the church, as well as court of Rome, all the thunders of the Vatican were employed against this invader of the church's prerogative. The pope, in his extreme indignation, threatened to depose Edward. He put this threat in execution against Elizabeth. Yet, in spite of religious prejudices, this was esteemed

esteemed so monstrous a stretch of power, and so odious to all christian princes, that the jesuits thought it expedient, by all means, to soften the appearance of it. One of their contrivances was, by searching into the origin of civil power, which they brought rightly, tho' for this wicked purpose, from the people. For they concluded, that, if the regal power could be shewn to have no divine right, but to be of human and even popular institution, the liberty which the people took in deposing kings, would be less invidious. Thus the jesuits reasoned on the matter. The argument was pushed with great vigour by Harding and his brethren in Elizabeth's reign ; but afterwards with more learning and address by Bellarmine, Mariana, and others.

To combat this dangerous position, so prejudicial to the power of kings, and which was meant to justify all attempts of violence on the lives of heretical princes, the protestant divines went into the other extreme ; and, to save the person of their sovereign, preached up the doctrine of Divine Right. Yet, it could hardly have kept its ground against so much light and evidence as has been thrown at different times on this subject, but for an unlucky circumstance attending the days of reformation. This was the growth of puritanism

nism and the republican spirit; which, in order to justify its attack on the legal constitutional rights of the crown, adopted the very same principles with the jesuited party: and, under these circumstances, it is not to be thought strange that a principle, true in the main, should be generally condemned and execrated. The crown and church of England had reason to look upon both these sorts of men as their mortal enemies. What wonder then they should unite in reprobating the political tenets on which their common enmity was justified and supported! So that it appears true, and a charge not to be denied, ‘That the despotism affected by the princes of the house of Stuart, has been owing in a great measure to the slavish doctrines of the clergy of the church of England.’ Liberty, religious and civil, at last prevailed over these impotent attempts; and the unhappy king Charles I. could not prevent his ministers first, and afterwards the constitution itself, from falling a victim to that fury, which, in the end, forced off his own head.

Such was the issue of the desperate conflict between prerogative and liberty. The wonder was, that this fatal experience should not have rectified all mistakes, and have settled the government on a sure and lasting basis a

the restoration. The people were convinced, that nothing was more requisite to their happiness, than the secure possession of their ancient legal constitution. The recalled family were not so wise; and in their attempts to revive those old exploded claims, which had succeeded so ill with their predecessors, they once more fell from the throne, and made room for the Revolution to pluck up all the noxious weeds of usurped power and rectify the errors of government.

Our new MAGNA CHARTA, or DECLARATION OF RIGHTS, settled, authenticated, and obtained by the Revolution, is a sufficient barrier against any future encroachments of the crown; and from hence we may date the truest æra of English liberty. It was interwoven indeed with the very principles of the constitution. It was inclosed in the ancient trunk of the feudal law, and was propagated from it. But its operation was weak and partial in that state of its infancy. It acquired fresh force and vigour with age, and has now at length extended its influence to every part of the political system.

William III. upon these principles, and partly in right of his consort Mary, eldest daughter of king James II. and partly by election, succeeded in 1689. The English

constitution being now formed and established upon the good foundation of freedom, justice, and safety, there was reason to hope by all sincere wishers to the welfare of their country, that it would subsist, if duly maintained in purity and vigour. But vice and folly found means to do too much towards defeating the purposes of the best government. Here there could be no fault in the plan, but there were great miscarriages, if not something worse, in the execution of it. Wicked Ministers and Favourites, tho' none considered in the light of all-grasping potentates, had also the ascendant in this reign by the prevalence of the most pernicious councils. Hated against the abdicated king and his adherents, was a specious pretext for covering the most villainous designs; and none ever thought themselves sufficiently rewarded for the services they had rendered the new king in this respect. The constant advice of his pretended friends and ministers to him was, " Borrow what you can; the more you borrow the more friends you make; interest is a stronger tie than principle." Hereupon, in the acts of parliament then passed, there were clauses, empowering the king to anticipate and borrow money on his revenues, which was the beginning of the funds so de-

destructive to the nation. The money thus lent to the public, as it is pretended in their great extremity, was squeezed out of the very bowels of the subject, who now pays interest for it, without receiving the least benefit or advantage in return. How this could be so concerted, is in itself amazing, but will be no difficult matter to conceive, if we consider, that clerks, agents, brokers, money-scriveners, commissaries, Jews, ministers and members of parliament, were allowed 30 or 40 per cent. for pretending to advance the public the very money they had already received, or just robbed them of. In those times it was usual to contract with the public to perform a certain service, suppose for thirty thousand pounds, one third down, and the rest payable at two different terms. The contractor, after receiving his ten thousand pounds down, either sold his contract to great advantage, or perhaps performed the whole service on credit. When the remaining payments became due, he, by another fund, advanced to the public at 30 per cent. premium, the very money it had paid him a few months before. Thus, without being one shilling out of pocket, he contrived to make the public 10, or 15,000 l. in debt to him. Things were contracted and paid for, that were

were never furnished : false musters were winked at by sea and land ; every one aimed at his share of the plunder : no man pretended to check another, and establish a precedent that might make against himself. The maxim was to live and let live ; and the nation, like a town taken by storm, was given up to plunder. It was at this time that the word Perquisite grew into vogue. Those, who did the real service, were forced to be content with their wages ; but secretaries, paymasters, clerks, and the like, must have, and had their Perquisites.—The first proprietors then, of that share of the profits of the industrious, undeservedly called Public Debt, were such vermin as from nothing took advantage of the public folly ; and by furnishing them their own money at an extravagant premium, got annuities assigned them for it at seven per cent interest. These harpies understood their trade too well to spare ready money to those who had done real service. Instead of money, all such were obliged to receive debentures, which their necessities forced them to part with to usurers at 50 or 60 per cent. discount. As soon as they found themselves possessed of these, they claimed all the merit and compassion due to the unhappy old soldiers, sailors, and other wretches they had starved out of them :

them : and, instead of money, of which they knew they had left none unsqueezed out of the present generation, they were so very obliging as to content themselves with having posterity delivered over to them in security for seven per cent. interest, to be paid, 'till the principal, which they never advanced, should be refunded. After the peace of Ryswick, those gentlemen got too high, and the people of England too low, to admit of inquiries. Public Credit grew a cant word ; and the law being debarred from enquiring into their titles, their securities were preferred to land, and found real purchasers, who actually paid a new premium for what had cost the sellers little or nothing.

One cannot help observing, that if king William had succeeded in his scheme, had made an intire conquest of France, and had given up every moveable thing in it to indemnify the people of England, rich as that country then was, it would not have been sufficient to have paid our expences ; nor would France, after such devastation, have fared so ill as England has done. Had the people of England stripped themselves to the skin, and given even to the bricks of their houses, in satisfaction to the usurers, these last would not have got half so much, nor

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would the people have suffered what they have done, by the mortgage they actually made over of their own industry, and that of their posterity, to the most worthless of mankind.

Besides these, there were other reasons which might well make the nation in general dissatisfied with their condition. The king's abolishing episcopacy in Scotland, and setting up presbytery there, gave the clergy some jealousy of his aversion to the church of England: the English were overlooked, and the Dutch the chief persons that were favoured and trusted, as appeared by the inquiries into the forfeited estates in Ireland; and bishop Burnet observes, that "few were preferred but whigs, except they purchased their places; for the whigs set every thing to sale." And, he also relates, that having complained himself to king William of the practice of the court in bribing and corrupting the members of parliament; the king answered, "He hated it as much as any man, but saw it was not possible to avoid it, considering the corruption of the age, unless he would endanger the whole." However, it may be said, that it was the tories that then saved the state from destruction, by forcing the king to assent to the important triennial act. They had changed

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sides or rather principles with the whigs, and became in their turns, the assertors of freedom and useful measures.

Anne, the only surviving daughter of king James II. by the lady Anne Hyde, succeeded in 1702. This reign would have stood with greater glory than any other in the annals of our history, were it not sullied by the peace of Utrecht, whereby it forfeited its title to that importance this nation would otherwise have ever since borne from it in Europe.

The whigs, who had the principal share in the Revolution, had preserved their superiority for a good part of queen Anne's reign; and the duke of Marlborough, solicitous after his own aggrandizement, had deserted the tories to embrace the party of the whigs. Of this party was the earl of Godolphin, lord high treasurer of England. Ties of interest, and of marriage, had closely connected him with Marlborough. One commanded the army with great reputation as a general, witness his several and signal victories gained over the French in the war that took up a great share of this reign; and the other had as high a character in the administration of the revenue, being the only of our Prime Ministers, who may be said to have acted worthily in that station. Bishop Burnet gives
this

this account of him under the reign of king Charles II. that he was the silentest and most modest man, who was perhaps ever bred in a court. He had a clear apprehension, and dispatched business with great method, and with so much temper, that he had no personal enemies. But his silence begot a jealousy, which hung long upon him. His notions were for the court; but his incorrupt and sincere way of managing the concerns of the treasury created in all people a very high esteem for him. He had true principles of religion and virtue, and never heaped up wealth. So that, all things being laid together, he was one of the worthiest and wisest men who was employed in that age. And in another place, the same historian observes, that he was a man of the clearest head, the calmest temper, and the most incorrupt of all the ministers he had ever known; and that after having been thirty years in the treasury, and during nine of those lord treasurer, as he was never once suspected of corruption, or of suffering his servants to grow rich under him, so in all that time his estate was not increased by him to the value of four thousand pounds. Boyer tells us, that he had a penetrating contemplative genius, a slow but unnerring apprehension, and an exquisite judgment, with few

few words, tho' always to the purpose. His superior wisdom and spirit made him despise the low arts of vain-glorious courtiers ; for he never kept suitors unprofitably in suspense, nor promised any thing, that he was not resolved to perform ; but as he accounted dissimulation the worst of lying, so on the other hand his denials were softened by the frankness and condescension, with which he informed those whom he could not gratify. His great abilities and consummate experience qualified him for a Prime Minister ; and his exact knowledge of all the branches of the revenue particularly fitted him for the management of the treasury. He was thrifty without the least tincture of avarice, being as good an œconomist of the public wealth, as he was of his private fortune. He had a clear conception of the whole government, both in church and state ; and perfectly knew the temper, genius, and disposition of the English nation : and tho' his stern gravity appeared a little ungracious, yet his steady and impartial justice recommended him to the esteem of almost every person ; so that no man, in so many different public stations, and so great a variety of business, ever had more friends or fewer enemies.

The

The lord treasurer and the duke of Marlborough were so great a support to each other, that it was difficult to attack them with any hopes of success. The only way the tories could think of weakening their antagonists, was to deprive them of the confidence of the queen ; and when they had done that, to prevail on her majesty to dissolve the parliament, in which the whigs had so great a majority, and to call a new one.

Some high-church preachers, among whom Dr. Sacheverell had the lead, either stirred up by others, or of their own accord, gave the first blow by their sermons. They were charged, and particularly Sacheverell, who had preached before the queen at St. Paul's, with having attacked the late Revolution and the Act of Toleration ; with having insinuated that the church of England had been in great danger under the preceding reign ; in short, that her majesty's administration, both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs, tended to subvert the constitution. Sacheverell had also said, that there were false brethren among persons in high character and employments in church and state. A few propositions relating to passive obedience inflamed the minds of all those who had such doctrine in abhorrence. Sacheverell underwent a vigorous prosecution,

and after long debates in parliament, in the queen's presence, he was sentenced to a suspension for three years, and his sermons condemned to be burnt by the common hangman.

Tho' he had attacked queen Anne's right to the crown, and her administration, she was not so much offended at his sermons, as at the violence of the whigs, in condemning the opposite doctrine. She perceived in the spirit of the Stuart family, the danger to which she had been hitherto exposed, in sharing her authority with people ever attentive to weaken, and even to abolish the prerogative of kings. The tories availed themselves of this disposition. She prorogued the parliament, and soon after made considerable alterations in the great offices of State. The earl of Sunderland, secretary of state, son in law to Marlborough, and son to that Sunderland, who in the same employment had abused the confidence of king James II. was discarded, and his place given to the earl of Dartmouth. The directors of the bank, who were either whigs, or excited by that powerful party, represented to her majesty that a change of ministry would affect the public credit, a thing so necessary in the present juncture; and some corporations were worked upon to address the queen to the same purpose. The

alarm was not less violent, tho' perhaps more general and more sincere in Holland.

The queen had at this time a particular confidence in one of her attendants, whose name was Mrs. Hill ; she was a relation of the duchess of Marlborough, who first introduced her to court. Mrs. Hill knew how to please her mistress, and finding herself beloved, she profited of the imprudence of her benefactress, who by her insolent airs, her pride, her disrespect, and ingratitude towards the queen, lost that favour of which she had been so long in possession. The duchess of Marlborough was disgraced ; her relation Mrs. Hill, instead of endeavouring to appease the queen, applauded her just indignation, and directed by her friend Harley, she set her mistress against the husband, as well as the wife.

Harley was a man of parts, who was thoroughly acquainted with the interests of his country, and with the genius of the people, was conversant in the laws and customs of the kingdom, and practised in the several artifices and intrigues by which parliaments are managed. He had been speaker of the house of commons, and retained a vehement desire of being revenged of Marlborough, who had been the cause of his being dismissed from

from his post of secretary of state. He was slave to no party. Sometimes whig, and sometimes tory, he preferred whatever way was the easiest to make his fortune. He imagined he should find the right road, when he could steal himself into the good graces of the queen.

Mrs. Hill had besides a private reason to be incensed against the duke of Marlborough, for opposing the grant of a regiment to her brother, which the queen at her request was inclined to ; and, to complete the matter, Sunderland, at that time secretary of state, endeavoured to prevail on the house of commons to address her majesty, that she would be pleased to discharge that woman from about her person, then married to Mr. Masham.

Harley had availed himself of these favourable circumstances to exasperate the queen, and by means of this Favourite to destroy those who were the object of his resentment. He bewailed with Mrs. Masham the fate of that princess. “ Such ingratitude, said he, her majesty had no reason to expect from people, whom she had raised to the highest pitch of honours and preferments ; nor could the best of sovereigns believe that these ungrateful wretches, far from acknowledging

her favours, should employ against her that very authority with which she had invested them. One single family, continued he, seems to domineer over England ; they not only dispose of all offices and employments, but even of the public funds. One man only is master of the army, of the fleet, and of the revenue, while the people groan under such a load of taxes to maintain the troops and navy. The true patriots lament the fate of a queen whose personal qualities deserve not only their respect, but their intire affection, which she would certainly possess, if more jealous of her authority, she ceased to lodge so great a part of it in the hands of a subject, successful indeed in war, but more attentive to accumulate wealth by all sorts of means, than solicitous about the real welfare of the state." For, after all, it did not yet appear to the tories, what advantage England derived from those victories of the duke of Marlborough, which were founded so high. Her trade was declining daily, her finances exhausted, the public debts increasing, so that very soon the people would not be able to pay the taxes. Yet they were as far as ever from seeing an end of this war, so unprofitable for the kingdom, so burdensome to the public, and useful only to the general, who had it in his

his power to continue it, while he had any expectation of enriching himself, and while his credit was supported in England by a powerful party, whose chief aim was to cramp the authority of their kings.

Mrs. Masham gave an account of this conversation to the queen; who relished the sentiments so well, that Harley was privately introduced to her majesty. He soon acquired her confidence in some private conferences. Among other things he is said to have told the queen, that Sacheverell's sermons were the contrivance of the tories; that they had a double motive in setting him on this work, one to induce the whigs to make a public declaration of their sentiments, so opposite to royal authority; the other to oblige Godolphin to give an account of his administration. This was the cause of Sacheverell's treating of Passive Obedience and of mal-administration. Godolphin imagined the only way to avert the inquiry, was to direct the attention of the parliament to some other object. ‘ Hence, said Harley, such noise and parade, to condemn an ignorant parson, and to suppress those sorry discourses, which would have been forgot the very moment after they had been delivered, if they had not attacked the administration.’ ’Tis true, Go-

dolphin with all his abilities and prudence, lost himself in the very course he had taken to avoid being shipwrecked : his stratagem turned to a bad account, for by the solemnity of Sacheverell's trial, the queen, who had been present at the debates, heard the violent declamations of the whigs against the Royal Prerogative ; and Harley could add nothing stronger to render them obnoxious to her majesty.

Pursuant to Harley's counsels, the queen took the staff of lord-high-treasurer of England from Godolphin, and appointed five lords commissioners of the treasury, of whom Harley was one, and as they were all of his chusing, he was very sure that none of them would contradict him, and that he might from that time be deemed lord-treasurer, as he was effectually shortly after, and besides created earl of Oxford and Mortimer. The disgrace of Sommers, president of the council, followed that of Godolphin. The earl of Rochester, the queen's uncle, had his place. Boyle, secretary of state, and Sunderland's colleague, made a voluntary resignation of his office, which was given to St. John, secretary at war, whose fine genius, lively wit, and acquired improvements, rendered him capable of filling the highest employments.

He

He was not known then to have any immediate connection with Harley, but seemed rather to be of Marlborough's party, or depended only on the queen his mistress, whose principal favourite he was. Other important changes soon followed, and at length a proclamation was issued for dissolving the present parliament, and calling a new one.

Such violent attacks all at once against the whigs, were felt in Holland with the same sensibility as in England. People made no sort of doubt at the Hague, but that the queen in changing her council would also change her measures. To continue Marlborough in the command of the army, was a point of dangerous consequence to the tory party; but it was difficult to dismiss him. His reputation was too well established. The only way to reduce him to the rank of a private subject, was to conclude a peace. The whigs strenuously opposed this measure. One would have imagined that the Dutch had taken the negociations at Gertrudenberg into their hands, only with a view to defeat them; and that the English had precluded themselves from all method of treating. Some safe way therefore was to be found, whereby the French king should be secretly informed of the state of England, and of the disposition of the

queen and council ; and this way was to be so private, that nobody should be able to discover, or even in the least to suspect it. The negociation was so carried on for some time, and secretary Bolingbroke at last put himself in person the finishing hand to it in France. All know the distress the French were reduced to at this time. This seasonable peace recovered their dejected spirits, and queen Anne did not long survive it.

She was the last of the Stuart family that reigned in England, the temper and disposition of which we best learn from lord Clarendon, particularly of the two Charles's and James II. “ It was the unhappy fate and constitution of that family, says he, that they trusted naturally the judgments of those, who were as much inferior to them in understanding as they were in quality, before their own, which was very good ; and suffered even their natures, which disposed them to virtue and justice, to be prevailed upon and altered and corrupted by those, who knew how to make use of some one infirmity that they discovered in them ; and by complying with that, and cherishing and serving it, they by degrees wrought upon the mass, and sacrificed all the other good inclinations to that single vice. They were too much inclined to like men at first

first sight, and did not love the conversation of men of many more years than themselves, and thought age not only troublesome but impertinent. They did not love to deny, and less to strangers than to their friends ; not out of bounty or generosity, which was a flower that did never grow naturally in the heart of either of the families, that of Stuart or the other of Bourbon, but out of an unskilfulness and defect in the countenance : and, when they prevailed upon themselves to make some pause rather than deny, importunity removed all resolution, which they knew neither how to shut out nor to defend themselves against, even when it was evident enough that they had much rather not consent ; which often made that which would have looked like bounty lose all its grace and lustre."

George I. elector of Hanover, succeeded by virtue of the Act of Settlement in 1714. The whigs were impatient for his accession, as the period in which they should overset their enemies, and without all doubt recover the whole authority of which they had been stripped by the tories. This prince being persuaded that the heads of the ministry in the preceding reign had acted contrary to his interests in conducting the negociations of peace, and that they had been actuated by other

other views still more to his prejudice and favourable to the Pretender, (though this is generally supposed to have been an artifice of the whigs to get into power, and keep their enemies out of the administration; for had his majesty been pleased to have encouraged all his subjects equally at his accession, the Pretender's name had never been mentioned;) appointed a secret committee to inquire strictly into the conduct of the earl of Oxford and lord viscount Bolingbroke. Mr. Walpole was nominated as chief to examine into both their papers, especially those of the secretary's office, lord Bolingbroke's department. He had not forgot that his avowed opposition to the peace, and his intrigues to excite the commons against it, had been the cause of his imprisonment in the Tower under the last administration: he found an opportunity of being revenged, while he gratified at the same time his new master, and acquired the confidence of a prince, who though politic enough, was indolent, and seemed always to remain a perfect stranger to the affairs of his kingdom. Walpole took advantage of this favourable conjuncture, to insert in his report whatever his passion and vindictive spirit could suggest; and he insinuated himself further into king George's good graces in such a manner,

that

that he not only preserved that prince's favour during his whole reign, but what may be reckoned a very extraordinary instance in any country, and perhaps the only one in England, he enjoyed the same credit and authority under his son, though these princes had been always of contrary sentiments, the son having an aversion to those who were in credit with his father.

We are now to consider Mr. Walpole, afterwards Sir Robert, and earl of Orford, as Favourite Prime Minister, Lord-Paramount of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and Plenipotentiary in regard to the disposal of all offices and posts of state. No minister ever before exceeded him in the arts of bribery and corruption. By such infamous measures and so destructive of good government, he constantly managed the parliaments under his direction. Each man had his price, or his foible seemed to be so accurately studied by him, that there was always some alluring bait thrown out to catch or gratify it. Buying and selling of boroughs; iniquitous jobs and contracts were quite the taste of his administration: his views by these methods was to make the king absolute, and preserve the power in his own hands. There is no difference to the people of England, whether the prince sets himself above

the laws ; or whether he is made to reign arbitrarily by a corrupt parliament. There was now no acting as under the houses of Tudor and Stuart ; but corruption might effect it with a parliament so at devotion ; and this is the reason that it is now said that England will not be undone but by a parliament thus swayed and influenced by corruption. Sir Robert was ready to give the finishing stroke to his wicked designs, by introducing his scheme for a general excise, when the clamours and invectives of the whole nation, ripe for a revolt and vengeance against him in particular, deterred him, and frustrated the attempt, when the bill had even passed both houses.

Every individual of the community has a right to declare in the most open and public manner their dislike and abhorrence of such a scheme, as being fraught with all those evils which were ever attributed to it, and as most apparently striking at the very fundamentals of our constitution. The collecting of any duties by the laws of excise, has, in all ages, been looked on as the most grievous and most oppressive method of collecting taxes ; and, in all countries, excises of every kind are looked on as badges of slavery, and tho' the English nation is now unfortunately sub-

subjected to some of them, yet it is hoped they will never more consent to any new excises, or to any new extension of the laws of excise, let the pretences for so doing be ever so specious.

The power and influence of the crown would, no doubt, be greatly increased and improved by Sir Robert's scheme ; great numbers of the people of this nation would thereby be rendered most submissive and obedient to those that should hereafter be employed by the crown ; but this should be so far from being a motive to their consent, that it is the strongest motive to the negative, because absolutely inconsistent with our constitution. 'Tis true, an ease to the landed interest was upon this, as well as upon other schemes of Sir Robert, thrown out by him, as a bait for some gentlemen ; but the landed gentlemen were not to be caught by such baits ; the hook appeared so plain, that it might be discovered by any man of common sense. However, the design was wicked, for it was an endeavour to set the landed interest, in a manner, at war with the trading interest of the nation ; it was endeavouring to destroy that harmony, which always ought to subsist among the people of the same nation, and which, if once destroyed, would cer-

certainly end in the ruin and destruction of the whole. Every landed gentlemen in England will do well to consider what value their lands would be of, if for the sake of a small and immediate ease to themselves, they should be induced to oppress and destroy the trade of their country ; and whoever considers this, will despise all such projects, and reject them with that contempt which they deserve. But there is another strong reason against it. The house of commons is mostly composed of gentlemen of the best families and greatest properties perhaps in the nation ; they have generally a great family-interest in the several counties, cities and boroughs they represent ; if such a scheme as Sir Robert's should then take effect, that interest would soon be destroyed ; and surely no man will ever agree to a scheme which must inevitably destroy the natural interest the great families have and always ought to have, in their respective counties, and transfer the whole to the crown. And indeed, if such a scheme should once be established, the power and influence of the crown would be so great in all parts of the nation, that no man could depend upon the natural interest he has in this country, for being a member of the house ; but must in all times for such a favour, depend intirely

intirely upon the crown, which it must be supposed, few would chuse to submit to.

The P----s succeeded Sir Robert in quality of Prime Ministers, but not Favourites. It was never found by their conduct that they endeavoured to make the paths of government strait which their predecessor had distorted into such unseemly ways and means, and so much to the discredit of his memory. The same maxims, the same measures, the same schemes were pursued, but in a more occult and timid manner. Patriots rose up from time to time to shake the reins of government out of their hands, as was done before to Sir Robert; but they proved false and pretended ones, deceitful and self-interested. Like the *ignis fatuus*, their delusive light drew after them a throng of popular voices and wishes; but these to their great astonishment were silenced and ashamed, when the flash of the patriotic spirit evaporated, and the patriots themselves, like the fabled Cerberus, were lulled into sweet composure after all their obstreperous din, by swallowing down the delicious morsel of a place, pension or title. So that the English nation have little room to gape after the vanity of patriotism; they should try the spirits, according to the advice of St. Paul, and be persuaded, that the case of

of patriotism is similar to that of the salvation expected by all good christians, none being truly and essentially entitled to it, without persevering steady and upright to the end.

Soon after the accession of George III, J--- E--- of B. made his entrance upon the stage of government, but was far from acting his part like an able politician. To make use of the words of a famous Parallel between him and Mr. P—, ‘ he raised himself to power by the favour of his prince,’ and as some say of the —— of ——. Thus supported, he became secretary of state, then first lord of the treasury, and prime minister; making it his study to provide, first, for himself; secondly, for his friends the Scotch; thirdly, for the nation; with an English peerage for his lady. Amidst the greatest pretensions to œconomy, he dissipated the nation’s wealth to procure friends, by multiplying needless places and pensions, raising new regiments when the old ones were not half compleat, and granting new commissions to regiments ready to be disbanded. He appeared very partial in promoting his countrymen to places of profit: this rendered him odious to the English. He concluded a peace scarce adequate to the nation’s successes in the late war, and added to the peace

a most injudicious unpopular tax, to pay a loan managed with great partiality. Hereby he involuntarily put an end to his own power when it seemed most flourishing. Professing to abolish parties by impartially employing all sorts, he has in fact, by his partiality, raised a new and dangerous division, the North of Britain against the South. By seeking the favour of the K—, he endeavoured to maintain his power in spite of the people ; and encroached on their liberties by an extension of the excise-laws. He did not know the genius of the people he would manage. Had he less ambition and vanity of openly governing, he would have had more real influence, and preserved his power longer. He is indisputably very proud ; but the favour and affection of a great K— is enough to make any man so."

From this summary account of the reigns from the Conquest down to the present time, the Reader may have good reason to think, that Prime Ministers and Favourites have been always odious to the English nation. Not only self-love, envy, ambition, disgust, and revenge do naturally create an aversion to any one subject, who seems to engross and appropriate to himself the common father of the people ; but the laudable affections, that

prompt to impartiality, tenderness to our prince, and love to our country, all conspire to make every indifferent person an enemy to the One Powerful Fellow-Member, that commands over the head, and usurps over the whole body. There never was yet, according to the observation of as wise a politician as ever England bred, a Prime Minister in Britain, but either broke his own neck, or his master's, or both, unless he saved his own by sacrificing his master's.

It would scarce have been safe, at least, it would not have been prudent in times when arbitrary notions prevailed, thus to entertain the Public with the dismal consequences that have attended upon vesting all Power in One Man; but at a time like this, we are cheared with more flattering aspects, especially, when it is the joy and consolation of all good men, to see a Prince and a Briton upon the throne, who a lover of liberty by principle, and out of his innate goodness, and paternal affection for his people, is ready to remove their fears, by removing every man that aspires to the guidance of the state-helm in quality of Prime Minister. The confidence of the best of princes may be abused for a time by artful and designing courtiers; but when the voice of his people reaches his ears, he will

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surely do them justice; and this we have
reason to hope from our gracious sovereign
GEORGE III. who will employ under his
sacred auspices, several equally able, equally
virtuous and disinterested great men, jointly
to draw on the well-balanced machine of
government.

F I N I S.

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George III. King of Great Britain and Ireland
and Elector of Hanover, out of respect to his
Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and
to the Royal Family, the Royal Coat of Arms
is placed on the back cover of this volume.

